RENE GUENON: A CHAPTER OF FRENCH SYMBOLIST THOUGHT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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PREFACE

I wish to express my thanks to the heirs of Noële Maurice-Denis Boulet, and especially to her brother, Jean-François Maurice-Denis, for having permitted me to consult René Guénon's extensive correspondence with Mme Boulet. I am also grateful to Professor Théodore Monod, who allowed me to consult his files on Guénon, and to Michel Vâlsan, Guénon's successor at Etudes Traditionnelles, who followed my work with interest and brought to my research the full scope of his experience and distinguished accomplishments in the field of traditional studies.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE iii

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER ONE

Part One: Traditional Thought: The Origins of Alchemy 14

Notes 38

Part Two: Illuminism and the Legacy of Nineteenth-Century Hermetic Thought 42

Notes 154

CHAPTER TWO

Part One: René Guénon 170

Notes 208

Part Two: Guénon and the Traditional Symbol: The Sacred Science 215

Early Signs 217

At the Crossroads 223

Le Symbolisme de la Croix 226

La Grande Triade 283

Aperçus sur l'Initiation 309

Conclusions 320

Notes 334

CHAPTER THREE

Guénon and Some Contemporary Literary Figures 348

- Antonin Artaud 349
- André Gide 360
- Henri Bosco 362
- André Breton 379
- *Le Grand Jeu* 403
- Notes 416

BIBLIOGRAPHY 420

ABSTRACT 442

XUM

INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the life and works of René Guénon in the context of the development of Symbolist doctrine in French literary and intellectual thought in the twentieth century.

Chapter I examines the earliest forms of symbolic perception in order to show the origins of Hermetic doctrine. This doctrine, and the principles of the Emerald Table in particular, is generally considered to be the basis of analogical or esoteric thought. I have attempted to show that traditional symbols were the vehicles which permitted the "primitive" or archaic mentality to move freely between the exoteric or material world of the senses and the esoteric or subtle domain of the imagination. The product of this symbolic perception was identity between the individual and a paradigmatic "Center of Centers".

Traditional man is often referred to in this study as "primitive" or "archaic" man. This term is not to be confused with the Enlightenment notion of the "noble savage". Rather, it refers to human activities which have been traced to the earliest ages, and which are characterized by qualities which belong or are ascribed to an original, primordial state.

XUM

In a certain restricted sense, the term "primitive" may be qualified by the meaning given to it by Lévy-Bruhl, who also used the term "pre-logical" to denote that facet of the "primitive" mentality which does not apply a kind of Aristotelian logic to certain phenomena, and therefore does not recognize these phenomena as being naturally contradictory. This "pre-logical" thought, which Lévy-Bruhl further qualified as "mystical" thought, is used to designate a form of perception which orders forces, events, relationships imperceptible to the senses. The terms "pre-logical" and "mystical" have long been stumbling-blocks in Lévy-Bruhl's work, and have contributed to the numerous prises de parti which have split anthropological research in France (Lévy-Bruhl's rift with Durkheim in 1927 was one such case). Unlike Eliade's, much of Lévy-Bruhl's approach to "traditional" societies is derived from a positivistic bias which proceeds empirically, and seems to lack the intuitive analogical processes of, say, a Lévi-Strauss, who, of course, rejects the very category of "pre-logic".

The conclusions of Lévy-Bruhl's first work on this subject, Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures (1910) [How Natives Think, tr. Lilian A. Clare (New York, 1966), p. 323], tend to justify this criticism:

> (1) The institutions, customs and beliefs of primitives imply a mentality which is pre-logical and mystic, oriented differently from

our own.

> (2) The collective representations and interconnections which constitute such a mentality are governed by the law of participation and in so far they take but little account of the logical law of contradiction.

As his work progressed, Lévy-Bruhl expanded the concept of participation to include all symbolic representations; yet he did not resolve the problems inherent in his vocabulary ("symbolic participation" versus "logical laws", etc.). The first conclusion of How Natives Think, however, was modified quite radically, and helps to clarify my use of the term "primitive". Some weeks prior to his death in 1939, Lévy-Bruhl wrote the following in his notebook on what he believed to be a weakness of How Natives Think: "Let me expressly correct what I believed to be true in 1910: there is no primitive mentality which is distinct from the other. ... There is mystical mentality more marked and more easily observed among primitives than in our own society, but present everywhere in the human mind." Cited in Ruth L. Bunzel's introduction to How Natives Think (p. xvii), this correction helps clarify Lévy-Bruhl's position on the "primitive" mentality. Furthermore, the idea is germane to the approach of Claude Lévi-Strauss, and is important in this study. In a senior thesis entitled Lévi-Strauss in a Literary Tradition (Princeton University, 1968), James A. Boon makes a good case for the parallel, "analogical" preoccupations of structural anthropology and Symbolism. The "lesson" implicit in Lévi-Strauss' work, as Clifford Geertz has pointed out, is that "one understands the thought of savages [read "primitive" or "traditional" man, too] neither by mere introspection nor by mere observation, but by attempting to think as they think and with their material" ("The Cerebral Savage: on the work of Lévi-Strauss," Encounter, XXVIII, no. 4, April, 1967, p. 31). Inspired by what Boon calls "mythic logic", Lévi-Strauss helps resolve the two concepts of time in traditional thought; they stem, he writes, "from one and the same desire to apprehend in a total fashion the two aspects of reality which the philosopher terms continuous and discontinuous; from the same effort to see them as complementary perspectives going on to the same truth" [Totemism, tr. Rodney Needham (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 98].

For primitive or traditional man, all essentially human activities participated in archetypal or mythical paradigms. Isolated objects or events in the external, profane world had no autonomous intrinsic value. All components of the physical universe or microcosm corresponded to similar but greater, macrocosmic phenomena. This "sense of order" was the fundamental expression of primordial or traditional symbols. It gave all exoteric, finite components of primitive man's world an esoteric or durable reality. This sense of perennity, in turn, was the major force behind primitive rituals of initiation. The principal results of initiation were a sense of cyclic time and absolute space. Traditional symbols, consequently, had the primary function of expressing temporal and spatial perennity.

Hermetic doctrine, which developed as a consequence of traditional modes of perception, is the basis of the Alchemists' magisterium or Great Work. The Emerald Table, which is generally taken to be the most concise expression of alchemical lore, contains the twelve principles or revelations of Hermes Trismegistos. These principles are the stuff of the most ancient forms of poetry, which sought to express the correspondences between exoteric phenomena and sacred or archetypal paradigms. The earliest poets, then, performed priestly functions as "mediators" between men and gods. The first dictum of Hermes' Emerald Table is: "In truth certainly and without doubt, whatever is below is like that which is above, and whatever is above is like that which is below, to accomplish the miracles of one thing." The poet, to be the effective mediator in this correspondent relationship, sought an intimate identity with the symbols of his poetry.

Alchemy depended for its structure as well as its meaning upon Hermetic doctrine. The medieval alchemists considered the Emerald Table to be the earliest recorded authority of their magisterium. Thus the Emerald Table may be considered as an important link in the chain of symbolic perception which stretches from prehistoric or traditional times to certain activities of the modern poet. The legacy of medieval alchemy was the transmission of traditional symbolism to the Enlightenment.

With eighteenth-century Illuminism and Theosophy, the alchemists' magisterium is taken up in France with a renewed, though less disciplined, vigor. Seeking the presence of traditional doctrine in esoteric religious dogma, the Illuminists conceived of initiation as the true understanding of correspondences between nature and the archetypes of an "invisible" world. Their aim was to possess an intimate vision of the archetypal principles of all "profane" or tangible reality. The instrument of such a revelation, they held, was intuition. Saint-Georges de Marsais announces the important role of intuition in passages of his Explication de la Genèse (1738), which are reminiscent of Breton's vocabulary in his theoretical writings on Surrealism. The Comte de Thiroux, turning to the Illuminati of Avignon in 1789 for proof of the immortality of the soul, echoes the deceptions of a Rimbaud in a world that has given reason more than its due. Auguste Viatte's seminal work on Les Sources occultes du romantisme (1928), and Alain Mercier's Les Sources ésotériques et occultes de la poésie symboliste (1970), form the backbone of this chapter, which attempts to trace the development and modification of esoteric doctrine in French literary thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Johann

Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801), writing of a "unique law" which governs all manifestations and unites them to the whole, conceives of nature as a "great text" which must be decoded, as it were, by the poet. Taking up this essential notion of Hermetic doctrine in Lavater's writings, Baudelaire relates it to the Swedenborgian idea of correspondence in the formulation of his poetic vision. Through functions of Amplitude and Exaltation, both of which form the symbolic armature of Hermetic perception, the Illuminists' writings carried on the philosophia perennis, and were largely responsible for its transmission to Symbolist poetry. Baudelaire's so-called "Law of Universal Analogy" was reserved, he wrote, for the poets, whom he called "les Alchimistes de la Pensée". Hermetic doctrine thus becomes once again the life-force of poetic creation. The four most important proponents of Illuminism in France in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, Martinès de Pasqually, Joseph de Maistre, and Fabre d'Olivet. Their influence and importance in the revival of Hermetic thought in France is examined in this chapter, and points up the interest of certain literary figures in Illuminism (Madame de Staël, Chateaubriand, Sénancour, Balzac). Saint-Martin (1743-1803), who called himself the Unknown Philosopher in a gesture of denial of his individuality, was one of the earliest thinkers to have gone back to Alchemy as a valid and precious means to the vision of a unifying principle which governs all life. Pasqually (1702-1740?) was taken up by the later Rosicrucians as an authentic spokesman for the Illuminist doctrine. Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821) envisaged the Great Work of the alchemists as the moving force of a secret, initiatic society, and wrote extensively on the symbology of numbers. Fabre d'Olivet (1768-1825) came to Illuminism in 1804, and conceived of all sciences in terms of a single unifying Law of Harmony. Fabre d'Olivet was one of the most eloquent writers on Hermetic doctrine in the nineteenth century, and was important in the transmission of this doctrine to the early Symbolist poets. As such, he was a precursor of René Guénon.

After the death of Fabre d'Olivet, literary esoterism in France begins to lose much of its authentic doctrinal relationships with Hermeticism and the _philosophia perennis_. Chapter I attempts to follow the thread of this tradition in the writings of Hoëné Wronski (1778-1843), whose little-known _Messianisme ou Réforme absolue du savoir humain_ is one of the most important Hermetic works of the nineteenth century.

With Eliphas Lévi, Illuminism and Hermetic doctrine find their most versatile and influential figure. Almost every major writer of the last decades of the nineteenth century owes his attachments to traditional symbolism to Lévi, whose writings point up the fundamental Hermetic synthesis which the Magus incarnated in his life and works. Lévi was instrumental in the development of René Guénon's thought, although the latter was more systematic and careful in his writings on

XUM

traditional symbolism. Lévi may have influenced Rimbaud; at any rate, there are remarkable doctrinal affinities between the two.

With Joséphin Péladan (1859-1918), and in Le Vice suprême in particular, we have one of the first "occultist" novelists. Inspired by Lévi, and by the myriad spiritualist movements of his time, Péladan brings together, in Le Vice suprême, all the fashionable "esoteric" vices of the age in a fairly transparent indictment of "demoniality" and "metaphysical vice", which he believed were the greatest threats to the spiritual survival of Europe. Péladan's "Rose-Croix du Temple", formed in 1891, had the primary purpose, besides being an attempt to revive the ancient Order of the Rosy Cross, of making esoterism and art the twin functions of the artist, who is regarded as Europe's savior. Known as "La Rose-Croix Esthétique", this society called for the syncretic, literary mise-en-oeuvre of a diluted form of Hermeticism.

Edouard Schuré's Les Grands Initiés (1889) was an immense popular success; it embodies the major tenets of Péladan's secret society. With Les Grands Initiés, idealism, spiritualism, and mysticism converge in the formulation of esoteric literature. Indeed, much of the Symbolists' early doctrinal writings seem to contain a similar convergence, notably those of René Ghil, Charles Morice, and Jean Moréas. Mallarmé, also, was marked by esoteric doctrine, and corresponded with

Victor-Emile Michelet, who was a kindred spirit, and whose Les Compagnons de la Hiérophanie is an important eyewitness account of some of the less literary but equally important intellectual figures in nineteenth century esoteric thought. Including Papus (Gérard Encausse), Stanislas de Guaïta, Eliphas Lévi, Joséphin Péladan, and Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, these companions were destined to give impetus and direction to the rising star of one of the most coherent Hermetic thinkers of the twentieth century: René Guénon (1886-1951).

* * * * * *

Chapter II is divided into two parts. The first is a brief biography of René Guénon. It should be noted that of the three full-length works on Guénon to date, two are essentially biographies: Paul Sérant, René Guénon (1953), and Paul Chacornac, La Vie simple de René Guénon (1958). The biography I have prepared, however, though relying in part on condensations of extant biographies which are necessary to this study, provides considerable new information about Guénon's life through the unpublished letters which he wrote to a Sorbonne friend, Noële Maurice-Denis Boulet. This correspondence, which I was fortunate to discover while conducting research in Paris in 1969-1970, has added much valuable material to Guénon's published writings. These forty-three letters to his friend, written between 1916 and 1924, contain some of his earliest, most fundamental doctrinal writings on traditional or archetypal symbolism. Ten of these letters, whose transcript is some 163 typewritten pages long, foreshadow in brief and undeveloped form some of Guénon's most important works, including _Orient et Occident_ (1924), _L'Homme et son devenir selon le Vêdanta_ (1925), _Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel_ (1929), _Le Symbolisme de la Croix_ (1931), _Les Etats multiples de l'Etre_ (1932), and _Aperçus sur l'Initiation_ (1946). The entire correspondence numbers some 224 typewritten pages, and is referred to extensively in the biography.

The second part of this chapter examines the traditional symbols in the works of René Guénon. These symbols, which Guénon calls "the vehicles of the Sacred Science", are developed most fully in four of Guénon's works: _Le Symbolisme de la Croix_ (1931), _Les Etats multiples de l'Etre_ (1932), _La Grande Triade_ (1946), and _Aperçus sur l'Initiation_ (1946). With the help of relevant supporting material from other works of Guénon, including _Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues_ (1921), _L'Homme et son devenir selon le Vêdanta_ (1925), _L'Esotérisme de Dante_ (1925), _La Crise du monde moderne_ (1927), _Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel_ (1929), and _Le Règne de la Quantité et les signes des temps_ (1945), this chapter attempts to give as concise a picture as possible of Guénon's thought, its roots in Hermetic symbolism, and his doctrinal legacy to certain literary figures who were influenced by him.

* * * * * * *

Chapter III attempts to examine the presence of Guénon's work in the writings of Antonin Artaud, Henri Bosco, André Breton, and members of the Grand Jeu movement, including René Daumal, Roger Gilbert-Lecomte, and André Rolland de Renéville.

I believe it would be possible to show that Guénon's influence is present in the works of other writers where close affinities of thought exist. Besides limitations of space and time, and the fact that this study intends primarily to examine the intellectual presence of a great thinker who remains practically unknown in this country and in Europe, the reason I have restricted my "Guénonian" analysis in Chapter III to a handful of writers is that they were the only ones, as far as I have been able to determine, to have expressed an unequivocal debt to Guénon in the elaboration of their literary theories. It is entirely possible that, with time and further research, other such debts will come to light, in which case Guénon's writings may well serve subsequently as a valuable key to fruitful analysis. As it stands, Chapter III intends to show that, as the traditional symbol was the vehicle which permitted early man to communicate intelligently and beautifully between the two complementary worlds, essence and substance, of which Man was the constant function, so was Guénon an instrument of communication between modern poets and their ancient counterparts.

CHAPTER ONE: PART ONE

TRADITIONAL THOUGHT: THE ORIGINS OF ALCHEMY

Esoterism, or the search for the hidden causes which underlie exoteric or earthly phenomena, is as old as recorded human expression, and perhaps as old as man himself. Primitive man, seeking to give form and reason to his activities, needing to justify his acts beyond the contingencies of physical need, has left us precious indications--hierophanies--that he related his simplest activities to a higher order.[1] Looking to the sun which warmed him and hearkened his days, to the moon which signalled the falling of his nights, he struggled to fathom his awe, painstakingly etching symbols into stone and celebrating his mysterious understanding with the steps and sounds of ritual.

The "primitive" or, let us say "archaic " mentality seems to have recognized that every human activity participates in an archetypal paradigm. Indeed, Mircea Eliade, who has spent many years documenting the presence of these archetypal participations, has written that in the primitive mentality, objects in the external, sensual world, as well as properly human acts, had no autonomous intrinsic value.[2]

This reluctance to place an inherent value on isolated objects or acts was early man's way of relating all components of his universe to an order. This order was the ultimate expression of all his symbols, the moving force of his rituals, the hidden, esoteric powers which gave meaning to his various ways and dignified them.

Thus--to adapt from the observations of Eliade--the objects which primitive man held to be sacred were so because, in one way or more, they participated in a predetermined symbol, or because they themselves constituted a hierophany, or celebrated a mythical act. Eliade writes that "l'objet apparaît comme un réceptacle d'une force étrangère qui le différencie de son milieu et lui confère sens et valeur. Cette force peut résider dans sa substance ou dans sa forme; elle est transmissible par voie de hiérophanie ou de rituel. Cette roche deviendra sacrée parce que son existence même est une hiérophanie: incompressible, invulnérable, elle est ce que n'est pas l'homme. Elle résiste au temps, sa réalité se double de pérennité."[3]

This perennity, Eliade has shown, was not a gratuitous quality imposed upon objects because they merely tended to outlive man. For his acts, too, were invested with a similar perennity, and tended to outlive him--the individual--in that they were repetitions of acts which were consecrated by ancestors (mythical or otherwise), by gods, by heroes, or else by time itself, ab origine. In every walk of his conscious life, primitive man moved in the footsteps of an archetype. Nothing he did had not been done before by someone who was somehow greater, somewhat closer to the Ideal, to the first "Doer".[4] Eliade writes: "Le produit brut de la Nature, l'objet faconné par l'industrie de l'homme ne trouvent leur réalité, leur identité que dans la mesure de leur participation à une réalité transcendante. Le geste n'obtient de sens, de réalité que dans la mesure exclusive où il reprend une action primordiale" (MER, p. 19).

This participation in an unchanging, transcendent order accompanies man's earliest attempts to measure himself in universal or metaphysical terms. His first and most powerful instincts seem to have catapulted him, beyond time and space, beyond the farthest reaches of dimension itself, to a perception of himself in terms of the universe. At the basis of his various microcosms, behind each harmonious unit formed by his acts in conjunction with the objects of his world, at the root of every isolated combination he wrought between himself and his limited world, primitive man seems to have found the components of a macrocosmic armature which pointed to a single unifying principle, a supra-terrestrial "Center of Centers", a supreme locus which was at once the origin and the destination of primitive man's becomings.

Eliade has documented and interpreted a certain body of evidence which supports these assertions and bears noting briefly. His major work on this subject, *Le Mythe de l'éternel retour* (1949), groups various series of related cultural facts and points to a structure of what he calls the archaic ontology. The first such grouping points to the existence, *ab origine*, of celestial archetypes which governed the acquisition and settling of territory, and the building and maintenance of temples and cities. From the earliest signs of Mesopotamian and Sumerian civilization, to later Iranian cosmogonies, Eliade concludes that "le monde qui nous entoure, dans lequel on sent la présence et l'oeuvre de l'homme--les montagnes qu'il gravit, les régions peuplées et cultivées, les fleuves navigables, les villes, les sanctuaires--ont un archétype extra-terrestre, conçu soit comme un 'plan,' comme une 'forme,' soit purement et simplement comme un 'double' existant précisément à un niveau cosmique supérieur" (*MER*, p. 26).

Not every part of the manifested world, Eliade adds, is invested with this archetypal similarity or correspondence. Throughout primitive history, signs have pointed to a firm (and not unexpected) fact: certain regions, be they deserts or unknown bodies of water, correspond to a mythical model of a different nature. Preceding Creation, and resisting man's order by virtue of their savage or unfathomable state, they participate in primordial chaos. Thus for primitive man, "l'établissement dans une contrée nouvelle, inconnue et inculte, équivaut à un acte de création" (MER, p. 27).[5]

This transformation of man's "vital space" from chaos into cosmos constitutes one of the earliest symbolic acts of the species. To invest his living areas with a satisfactory reality, his microcosm with a valid form, primitive man engaged in a symbolic recreation of his world. Eliade points out that in the primitive mentality, reality manifests itself as "force, efficacité et durée." Thus the real is, quintessentially, the sacred, "car seul le sacré est d'une manière absolue, agit efficacement, crée, et fait durer les choses" (MER, p. 29).

Eliade's well-documented studies have shown that a symbolic structure parallel to that of repetitive or archetypal creation developed in the primitive mind. He has called it the symbolism of the Center, and draws from evidence which he finds in the immemorial sacred texts of India, Iran, Laos, Finland, Japan, Malaya, Mesopotamia, Palestine, Babylon, and others, the following conclusions: 1) Sacred Mountains, loci of Heaven and Earth, are at the center of the world. 2) All temples and palaces, and by extension all sacred cities, are conceived as "sacred mountains", and symbolized as Centers. 3) Being an Axis Mundi, the city and the sacred temple are considered as the meeting points between Heaven, Earth, and Hell. In the primitive mind, Eliade concludes, "l'Univers est conçu comme prenant son extension à partir d'un point central" (MER, p. 30).[6] All holy places were the loci which brought together symbolically the superior, the earthly, and the subterranean worlds. "Le 'Centre' est donc la zone du sacré par excellence, celle de la réalité absolue" (MER, p. 38). Thus all symbols of absolute or unchanging reality, the Tree of Life, the Fons Juventutis, among others, are found at a symbolic "Center", and paths leading to them are always arduous and fraught with obstacles, for the "Way" is "un rite de passage du profane au sacré; de l'éphémère et de l'illusoire à la réalité et à l'éternité; de la mort à la vie; de l'homme à la divinité" (MER, p. 38). Reaching the Center was a process of initiation by which primitive man attained a real and durable existence:

> Par la répétition de l'acte cosmogonique, le temps concret, dans lequel s'effectue la construction, est projeté dans le temps mythique, in illo tempore où la fondation du monde a eu lieu. Ainsi sont assurées la réalité et la durée d'une construction, non seulement par la transformation de l'espace profane en un espace transcendant ('le Centre'), mais aussi par la transformation du temps concret en temps mythique (MER, p. 42).

All primitive rituals were performed in the name of a divine or transcendent model, an archetype. This extra- or suprahuman model served, Eliade shows, to legitimize all human acts by investing them with an absolute reality, a mythical duration. The earth primitive man tilled, the homes, palaces, temples, and cities which he built, the voyages he undertook, the feasts and sacrifices he organized, as well as his births, his weddings, his dances, his deaths, all repeated that most universal of cosmogonic acts: the Creation of the World; all participated in the primordial activities of celestial prototypes; all symbolized the union of Heaven and Earth. Every event in the life of primitive man commemorated, celebrated an episode or more of the cosmic drama.[7] This symbolism of mythical precedents is one of the earliest and most widespread in recorded history.

In the primitive mentality, to paraphrase Eliade, an object or an act are "real" only as a direct function of their imitation-repetition of an archetype. Reality is acquired only through repetition or participation. Anything which has no exemplary model is literally meaningless, has no sense, lacks reality. Man's earliest aspirations were to "become" archetypal and paradigmatic. "Cette tendance peut paraître paradoxale," Eliade writes, "dans ce sens que l'homme des cultures traditionnelles ne se reconnaît comme réel que dans la mesure où il cesse d'être lui-même (pour un observateur moderne) et se contente d'*imiter* et de *répéter* les gestes d'un *autre*. En d'autres termes, il ne se reconnaît comme *réel*, c'est-à-dire comme 'véritablement lui-même', que dans la mesure où il cesse précisément de l'être" (*MER*, p. 63). By the same token, Eliade concludes that the primitive ontology has a Platonic structure. Indeed, "Platon pourrait être considéré dans ce cas comme le philosophe par excellence de la 'mentalité' primitive," for Plato's great merit was to have justified theoretically the vision of the primitive mind as a product and a generator of divine archetypes (*MER*, p. 64).

With the acquisition of reality through the repetition of exemplary and transcendent prototypes, man implicitly abolished profane time, history itself, and entered the domain of myth. This explains in large part Eliade's observation that "la mémoire collective est anhistorique." In describing "collective memory" as "anhistoric ", Eliade notes: "Cela est dû au fait que la mémoire populaire retient difficilement des événements 'individuels' et des figures 'authentiques'. Elle fonctionne au moyen de structures différentes; *catégories* au lieu d'*événements*, *archétypes* au lieu de *personnages historiques*. Le personnage historique est assimilé à son modèle mythique..." (*MER*, pp. 74-75). In a very important sense, this "anhistoric" memory did not--certainly *could* not--deny "linear" or irrevocable time (a notion which Eliade seems to confuse with "history"), but substituted it for cyclic or paradigmatic time. The affirmation that "collective memory" is anhistoric, Eliade writes, implies neither a "popular origin" of folklore, nor a "creative creation" of epic poetry. "Nous voulons seulement dire que--indépendamment de l'origine des thèmes folkloriques et du talent plus ou moins grand du créateur de la poésie épique--le souvenir des événements historiques et des personnages authentiques se modifie au bout de deux ou trois siècles afin de pouvoir entrer dans le moule de la mentalité archaïque, qui ne peut accepter l'individuel et ne conserve que l'exemplaire."

This anhistoric nature of the collective primitive mind, its unwillingness to retain particular historical events without transforming them into functions of archetypes in an abstract and limitless past, in a primordial tradition in illo tempore, is at the very roots of Jung's notion of the collective unconscious as it is manifested in the modern world. In numerous archaic traditions, Eliade has shown, even death occurred in terms of archetypes where "les âmes des morts ordinaires n'ont plus de 'mémoire', c'est-à-dire perdent ce que l'on peut appeler leur individualité historique."[8] Eliade notes that the primitive mentality defended itself against those elements of historical consciousness which were new or irreversible; "l'intérêt pour l'irréversibilité et la 'nouveauté' de l'histoire," he adds, "est une découverte récente dans la vie de l'humanité" (MER, p. 80). With this discovery of his personal, individual self, man was split between two powerful forces which acted upon him unconsciously, between cyclic and linear time. His language adapted itself to his new needs: how to measure himself in terms of his obvious and finite realities on the one hand, and his very real yet elusive and tantalizing myths on the other?

Every facet of the primitive life was geared to a sacred, archetypal repetition, to a ceremony which reminded him constantly that the hidden forces which governed his gestures both justified them and consecrated them to a cyclic regeneration.

With the annual return-to-chaos and symbolic rebirth into a new cycle, and with the vision of nature as a hierophany whose laws reveal a divine existence, the archaic mind functioned in, and with, hope. Most of his activities, Eliade writes, "dénotent l'espoir que l'abolition du temps est possible à ce moment mythique où le monde est anéanti et recréé" (MER, p. 101).[9] This fundamental hope was central to the survival of traditional man, for it was a buttress against all the material, pragmatic evidence of his finitude. "Pour l'homme traditionnel," Eliade concludes, "l'imitation d'un modèle archétypal est une réactualisation du moment mythique où l'archétype a été révélé pour la première fois. Par conséquent, ses cérémoniaux aussi, qui ne sont ni périodiques ni collectifs, suspendent l'écoulement du temps profane, la durée, et projettent celui qui les célèbre in illo tempore" (MER, p. 119). Through a cyclic return, an "eternal return ", primitive man came to terms with time. Investing it with a cyclic direction, he made it reversible: "Tout recommence à son début à chaque instant. Le passé n'est que la préfiguration du futur" (MER, p. 133). For primitive man, there is nothing really new under the sun. The Hegelian dialectic, which takes essentially the same lines, distinguishes nonetheless, between Nature and History--the latter, Eliade observes, being "free" and always new, never repeating itself, but conforming to the laws of Providence. To this idea of history, Hegel opposed Nature, "où les choses se reproduisent à l'infini" (MER, p. 135). Primitive man, faced with this irreversible aspect of history, with all it contained in the way of cosmic catastrophes, military disasters, social injustice or personal conflicts, chose rather to consider history as a necessary evil, and relegated it to the domain of the profane, or the illusory. The early sacred texts which Eliade cites are clear on this: reality was bound in with archetypes, "la révélation in illo tempore des normes de l'existence, faite par une divinité ou un être mythique" (MER, p. 140). Annulling profane time, yet living in harmony with the turns and rhythms of cyclic time, traditional man was the product of his prototypes. Furthermore, Eliade shows, his sufferings had meaning, for they conformed to an "order of things", to a "fate" whose value was accepted. He never seems to have attributed his failures or his reversals to chance, but to magic influences acting in the name of chaos. His archetypes taught him, furthermore, that suffering is never definitive, that death is always followed by resurrection, that "toute défaite est annulée et dépassée par la victoire finale" (MER, p. 149).

Thus slowly, a notion of Divine Will developed, which related all earthly or profane phenomena to a higher, more permanent order. Suffering, the reversals of life, all served to remind primitive man that he had strayed, that his sight had wandered from the sacred archetype. For the ancient Hebrews, as the Old Testament shows repeatedly, every single "historical" or "new" calamity was considered as a punishment, meted out by the Divine Will. This punishment, in turn, had a salutory effect, for it served to bring man back to his God. "Ainsi pour la première fois," Eliade writes, "les prophètes *valorisent l'histoire*, parviennent à dépasser la vision traditionnelle du cycle--conception qui assure à toutes choses une éternelle répétition--et découvrent un temps à sens unique" (*MER*, p. 154). Thus is established the idea that historical or profane events have an intrinsic value, which is a function of Divine Will. Yahveh replaced the divinities which created, which *were* archetypes, became "une *personnalité* qui intervient sans cesse dans l'*histoire*, qui révèle sa volonté à travers les événements... Les faits historiques deviennent ainsi des 'situations' de l'homme face à Dieu, et comme tels acquièrent une valeur religieuse que rien jusque-là ne pouvait leur assurer" (*MER*, p. 155).

Eliade believes the Hebrews to have been the first to consider history as a revelation of God. For primitive or traditional man, Eliade writes, "la première danse, le premier duel, la première expédition de pêche, tout comme la première cérémonie nuptiale ou le premier rituel, devenaient des exemples pour l'humanité parce qu'ils révélaient un mode d'existence de la divinité, de l'homme primordial, du Héros civilisateur, etc., mais ces révélations avaient eu lieu dans le temps mythique.... Il en va tout autrement dans le cas de la révélation monothéiste. Celle-ci a eu lieu dans le temps, dans la durée historique..." (MER, pp. 155-156). Archetypes do not disappear with monotheism, however; they simply move forward to a future mythical time, to be repeated "lorsque les temps seront accomplis." Thus the future will regenerate time, "lui rendra sa pureté et son intégrité originelles. In illo tempore se situe ainsi non seulement au commencement, mais aussi à la fin des temps" (MER, p. 157). With monotheism, Eliade notes, the great difference was that the ancient victory over the forces of chaos would no longer be repeated every year, but would be projected into a perpetual and messianic future. With the Messiah's arrival, and with the Second Coming, the world would be saved once and for all, and all of history would cease to exist. Thus "l'irréversibilité des événements historiques et du temps est compensée par la limitation de l'histoire dans le temps" (MER, p. 165). By this token, the traditional mentality and monotheism have one major aspect in common: they are both essentially archetypal. The difference lies in that where traditional man saw the solution to his anguish in a cyclic repetition which ignored the reversals of history, monotheistic man conceived of his immunity to historical events as a straight temporal line which would one day "stop" and regenerate him once and for all. In a much larger sense, archetypal and monotheistic man conceived of history as "static" and "dynamic" time, respectively. The common denominator, which helped identify both concepts in terms of a similar myth, was narrative itself.

The single most fundamental question that runs through all of Eliade's studies of archetypal or repetitive symbolism is: How does man endure history? From archetypal paradigms to the monotheistic view of time's end as ultimate salvation, from cosmic cycles to irreversible linear events, "si diverses que fussent les positions possibles de l'homme, elles présentaient un caractère commun: l'histoire pouvait être supportée, non seulement parce qu'elle avait un sens, mais encore parce qu'elle était *nécessaire* ... *voulue* par le rythme cosmique, par le démiurge, par les constellations ou par la volonté de Dieu" (*MER*, pp. 198-199). Indeed, Eliade suggests that the myth of eternal or archetypal repetitions survived, despite the disapproval of a religious intellectual elite, into the Middle Ages and well into the Renaissance. Its principal goal, in the name of a freedom which it considered to be absolute, was to abolish time.

Before a name was given to it, the primitive ordering of the world in archetypal terms foreshadowed a tradition of symbolic activities which has exercised considerable and powerful influence upon literary creation, and especially poetry. Known variously as *Kême*, by the black earth which was its ancient Egyptian materia prima, and especially by the Arabic al-kimiya which derived from that ancient earth, this was Alchemy, the Sacred Science. Alchemy has its foundation and essence in a brief and revealing text, known as the Emerald Tablet or Emerald Table (Tabula Smaragdina), which is generally accepted as a revelation of Hermes Trismegistos, Hermes the Thrice-Great. Much in keeping with the reluctance of primitive or traditional man to accord much importance to the "personal" facets of his individual lives, the origins of Hermes Trismegistos are shrouded in mystery. Titus Burckhardt, who has devoted much inspired work to traditional studies, is not sure "whether the name Hermes stood for a man or for a priestly-prophetic function stemming from Hermes-Thoth."[10] Ménard states that no certain date can be established for the writings which are attributed to Hermes Trismegistos, asking: "Est-ce un homme, est-ce un Dieu? Pour les commentateurs, il semble que ce soit l'un et l'autre. Les aspects multiples de l'Hermès grec l'avaient fait confondre avec plusieurs Dieux égyptiens qui avaient entre eux et avec lui beaucoup de rapports. On croyait éviter la confusion par des généalogies, et on disait qu'il y avait plusieurs Hermès."[11] Indeed there are, but they all seem to be related, and Hermes Trismegistos himself seems to synthesize the most ancient of Egyptian deities, Thoth, "the God who presided over all priestly arts and sciences" (Burckhardt, p. 16), whom Ménard believes to have been the first Hermes; and also the father of Tat, who after the Deluge is said to have translated the prophecies of the Emerald Table into Greek. Mercury-Hermes, who invented the lyre, or "sacred arch," by stretching strings of cow's gut across the shell of a turtle, seduced Apollo with his music, and was loved by Zeus, who chose him to mediate between humans and the gods of the underworld, Hades and Persephone. Hermes, whoever he may have been historically, is generally recognized as one of the earliest mediators between man and divinity. As such, he was a kind of composite archetype, and exercised a powerful influence on the earliest forms of sacred poetry.

Burckhardt has shown that alchemy depended for its structure as well as its meaning upon a body of thought which is found synthesized in Hermes Trismegistos' Emerald Table. Indeed, he notes, the medieval alchemists accepted the Table as a revelation of Hermes, for "it is wholly in accord with the spirit of the Hermetic tradition...[and] there is no convincing reason to doubt its connection with the origins of Hermetism" (p. 196). An eighth century text of the tablet by Jâbir ibn Hayyân is known, Burckhardt notes, and Albertus Magnus knew of a Latin translation of that Arabic text whose style is pre-Islamic and must date not later than the seventh century.[12]

The Emerald Table contains in germ-form all elements of the Hermetic tradition; also, it is the earliest known "explanation" of the symbolic process by which primitive or archaic man related all components of his life to archetypal paradigms. As such, the Emerald Table is the earliest, most concrete link which exists in the transmission of traditional symbolic thought from its prehistoric forms to certain activities of the modern poet. The twelve dicta of the Emerald Table are brief, and bear noting in full, as they will be used extensively in this study:

1. In truth certainly and without doubt, whatever is below is like that which is above, and whatever is above is like that which is below, to accomplish the miracles of one thing.

2. Just as all things proceed from the One alone by meditation on One alone, so also they are born from this one thing by adaptation.

3. Its father is the sun and its mother is the moon. The wind has borne it in its body. Its nurse is the earth.

4. It is the father of every miraculous work in the whole world.

5. Its power is perfect if it is converted into earth.

6. Separate the earth from the fire and the subtle from the gross, softly and with great prudence.

7. It rises from earth to heaven and comes down again from heaven to earth, and thus acquires the power of the realities above and the realities below. In this way you will acquire the glory of the whole world, and all darkness will leave you.

8. This is the power of all powers, for it conquers everything subtle and penetrates everything solid.

9. Thus the little world is created according to the prototype of the great world.

10. From this and in this way, marvellous applications are made.

11. For this reason I am called Hermes Trismegistos, for I possess the three parts of wisdom of the whole world.

12. Perfect is what I have said of the work of the sun.

Burckhardt has warned against the popular conception of alchemy as "a primitive precursor of modern chemistry ". The craft experience traditionally associated with the medieval alchemists, and notably the elaborate laboratories and experiments based on complicated formulae for the preparation of metals, colors, and glass, has provided ample fodder for historians whose purpose seems to have been to neglect a major aspect of alchemy in favor of its most apparent, least revealing lines of force. As the alchemists remain in an inhospitable historical past, the corpus of their craft, the exoteric or outward manifestations of their magisterium seem to have survived, while their apparently meaningless formulae, their magical conjurations, and the ceremonial, incantatory armature of their work have been ignored.

The most telling features of alchemy, in formulating analogies which show it to be perfectly parallel to the traditional mentality, have been studied by Burckhardt. There is, he states, "a certain principle of unity running through alchemy," and this unity is true in Indian, Western, and Chinese alchemy--indeed, in every genuine Hermetic tradition in the world. "If alchemy were nothing but a sham, its form of expression would betray arbitrariness and folly at every turn; but in fact it can be seen to possess all the signs of a genuine 'tradition,' that is to say, an organic and consistent--though not necessarily systematic--doctrine, and a clear-cut corpus of rules, laid down and persistently expounded by its adepts" (Burckhardt, p. 8).

Alchemy has been traced back to the middle of the first milennium before Christ, and has existed, Burckhardt states, "probably since prehistoric times." Gold and silver, being conceived as reflections of the sun and the moon, were sacred metals long before they became the matter of currency. On the nature of this most ancient of symbolic thoughts, Burckhardt writes (pp. 11-12):

> One must not confuse a symbol with a mere allegory, nor try to see in it the expression of some misty and irrational collective instinct. True symbolism depends on the fact that things, which may differ from one another in time, space, material nature, and many other limitative characteristics, can possess and exhibit the same essential quality. Thus they appear as diverse reflections, manifestations, or productions of the same reality--which in itself is independent of time and space. It is thus not quite right to say that gold represents the sun, and silver the moon; rather it is the case that the two noble metals and the two luminaries are both symbols of the same two cosmic or divine realities.

Thus the search for gold and silver, being reflections of a divine archetype of which the sun and moon are a part, functioned in terms of the profoundly sacred nature of the metals.

The archaic mentality, seeing no dichotomy between the "spiritual" and the "practical", conceived of these precious metals as outward or gross reflections, in turn, of an inner state. "That there is an inward gold," Burckhardt writes, "or rather, that gold has an inward as well as an outward reality, was only logical for the contemplative way of looking at things, which spontaneously recognized the same 'essence' in both gold and the sun. It is here, and nowhere else, that the root of alchemy lies" (p. 15).

All indications seem to confirm the assertion that the "operative" or manifested symbolic activities of the alchemists (most of which involved the smelting and purification of metals) were meant to be meaningless in themselves. Burckhardt transmits the following text from Artephius, an alchemist who wrote around 1250 and who may have been an Arab:

> Is it not recognized that ours is a cabalistic art? By this I mean that it is passed on orally, and is full of secrets. But you, poor deluded fellow, are you so simple as to believe that we would clearly and openly teach the greatest and most important of all secrets, with the result that you would take our words literally? I assure you in good faith (for I am not so jealous as other philosophers), that whoever would take literally what the other [alchemists] have written, will lose himself in the recesses of a labyrinth from which he will never escape, for want of Ariadne's thread to keep him on the right path and bring him safely out.... 13

And again, a testimony of this voluntary mysteriousness is given by Synesios (fourth century), who wrote:

> The [true alchemists] only express themselves in symbols, metaphors, and similes, so that they can only be understood by saints, sages, and souls endowed with understanding. For this reason they have observed in their works a certain way and a certain rule, of such a kind, that the wise man may understand and, perhaps after some stumbling, attain to everything that is secretly described therein. 14

The Hermetic doctrine is rooted in the age-old assertion that man, the microcosm, and the universe, or macrocosm, correspond to each other in a union which is the very matter of all order. In a profane or pragmatic sense, this is a contradiction in terms, for the notion implies a fundamental identity between the "knower" and the object of his knowledge. The ancient doctrine of the reciprocal correspondence between cosmos and man is, therefore, Burckhardt states, "founded on the idea of the unique and Transcendent Intellect, whose relationship to what is commonly called 'intellect' (namely reason alone) is like that of a source of light to its reflection in a restricted medium" (p. 36).

The Corpus Hermeticum, containing the works attributed to Hermes-Thoth, survived in Greek, and in Platonic language at that. The oldest extant drawings of a Hermetic nature are on Egyptian papyri. The absence of early Egyptian texts, Burckhardt notes, is not surprising, for "it is an essential feature of sacred art that it is transmitted orally" (p. 16).

Thus there is no early text of the Emerald Table; it survived, however, in the Islamic world, where it flowered in the works of Jâbir ibn Hayyân and his pupils in the eighth century, and was transmitted to the West through Byzantium and Spain.[15] Yet it was with the Renaissance that the most significant wave of alchemy reached the West, largely due to the great influx of Greek thought. Ironically enough, the decline of alchemy in the West began almost as the Renaissance picked up momentum, and this decline, Burckhardt notes, "proceeded apace with the humanistic and already fundamentally rationalistic development of Western thought, by which any spiritual and intuitive universality of outlook was deprived of its very basis" (p. 20).[16]

The most fundamental legacy of alchemy was to have continued the primordial tradition whereby, through both "inward" and "outward" processes, archaic man related himself, transmuted himself into something more lasting and somehow more noble than he was. With eighteenth-century Illuminism, this tradition, perhaps dimmer and certainly more diluted than it had been before, knew a brief moment of life, shone briefly in the works of people who would succeed in transmitting it to several generations of writers.

Burckhardt himself has related alchemy to the processes of artistic creation, "not from the point of view of its outward or aesthetic aspect, but as an inward process whose goal is the ripening, 'transmutation,' or rebirth of the soul of the artist himself" (p. 23). Indeed, alchemy was known as _ars regia_, the royal art, befitting the true leaders of men. "The alchemical symbols of perfection refer to the spiritual mastery of the human state, to the return to the center or mean, to what the three monotheistic religions call the regaining of the earthly paradise" (Burckhardt, p. 25). This is precisely the quality which makes of alchemy the axis between the traditional, archetypal mentality and the Illuminist doctrine of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER ONE: PART ONE

NOTES

NOTES

1. V.E. Michelet's Les Compagnons de la Hiérophanie (1937) points up the importance of this term in the revival of occultism in the nineteenth century. The term denoted the priests who "revealed the sacred" at the mysteries of Eleusis.

2. Mircea Eliade, Le Mythe de l'éternel Retour (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p. 17. Subsequent references to this work, hereafter cited as MER, will be noted in the text.

3. Ibid. This notion of perennity is taken up extensively in Eliade's Traité d'Histoire des Religions (Paris: Payot, 1949), which contains detailed documentation from early sacred texts.

4. Modern psychology has shown that, often unconsciously, man has continued this paradigmatic tradition into the twentieth century--and this despite a conscious effort to give himself an individual, or historic context. See C.G. Jung, Psyche and Symbol (New York, 1958), especially pp. 123-147, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype."

5. Eliade adds that when the Scandinavians inhabited Iceland and prepared the land for tillage, "ils ne considérèrent cet acte ni comme une oeuvre originale, ni comme un travail humain et profane. Leur entreprise n'était pour eux que la répétition d'un acte primordial: la transformation du Chaos en Cosmos par l'acte divin de la Création" (MER, p. 27).

6. In Images et Symboles (Paris, 1952), Eliade writes of these loci as forming "une géographie sacrée et mythique, seule effectivement réelle," which he opposes to a profane, 'objective' geography, "en quelque sorte abstraite et non essentielle, construction théorique d'un espace et d'un monde que l'on n'habite pas et partant que l'on ne connaît pas" (p. 50).

7. Eliade states (MER, p. 54) that "luttes, conflits, guerres, ont la plupart du temps une cause et une fonction rituelles." He adds: "On ne peut en aucun cas expliquer la guerre ou le duel par des motifs rationalistes."

8. MER, p. 78. He adds: "Le fait que, dans la tradition grecque, seuls les héros conservent leur personnalité (c'est-à-dire leur mémoire) après la mort, est d'une

compréhension aisée: n'ayant réalisé pendant sa vie terrestre que des actions exemplaires, le héros en conserve le souvenir puisque, d'un certain point de vue, ces actions ont été impersonnelles." The exemplary archetypal hero is treated in an illuminating book by Paul Diel, Le Symbolisme dans la Mythologie grecque (Paris: Payot, 1952). See especially Chapter IV, "Les Mystères d'Eleusis," pp. 247-288.

9. Eliade adds (p. 102) that the symbolic regeneration of time by the ritualistic repetition of the Creation is still practiced by the Mandaeans of Iraq and Persia. Also, "encore aujourd'hui, au début de l'année, les Tatars de Perse ensemencent une jarre remplie de terre; ils le font, disent-ils, en souvenir de la Création."

10. Titus Burckhardt, Alchemy (London: Stuart & Watkins, 1967), p. 196. This work was first published in German under the title Alchemie, in 1960. Subsequent references to this work will be noted in the text.

11. Louis Ménard, Hermès Trismégiste (Paris: Didier, 1866), p. xxxv. Developing ideas from the Bhaghavat-Gîta (VII, IX, X, among others), Ménard shows that Hermetic thought is present almost textually in Vedic tradition. He adds (p. xli): "Comme il n'y a pas de preuves positives d'une communication entre l'Inde et l'Egypte, on ne peut expliquer ces analogies par des emprunts. Il est seulement curieux de trouver, chez des peuples différents, les mêmes doctrines à côté des mêmes formes sociales."

12. Burckhardt uses the Arabic version prepared by J.F. Ruska in Tabula Smaragdina (Heidelberg, 1926).

13. Burckhardt, p. 28. All references from early alchemical texts are taken from Bibliothèque des philosophes chimiques (Paris: Salmon, 1741).

14. Burckhardt notes (p. 28): "It is disputed whether or not Synesios is to be identified with the Bishop of Cyrene of that name (379-415). The latter was a pupil of the Alexandrian woman Platonist Hypatia."

15. Burckhardt states (p. 19): "No doubt it was because the name Jâbir had become the hallmark of much alchemical lore that the author of the Summa Perfectionis, a thirteenth-century Italian or Catalan, also assumed the name in its latinized form of Geber."

16. In the celebrated letter which Gargantua writes to Pantagruel, who has taken up his studies in Paris,

Gargantua advises his son to take full advantage of knowledge so as to acquire virtue. Gargantua writes that with Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Chaldean, and Arabic, Pantagruel must learn to imitate Plato and Cicero, and must study history, geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy. Yet Gargantua admonishes his son: "Laisse-moi l'astrologie divinatrice et l'art de Lullius, comme abus et vanités" (II, vii). Raymond LLull (1235-1315), a Catalan scholar and linguist, was an alchemist.

Descartes, seeking "une connaissance claire et assurée de tout ce qui est utile à la vie," found this sense of a "universal" knowledge neither in the staggering variety and depth of his more conventional studies, nor in occult studies, including astrology. In *Discours de la Méthode* (Part I), he writes: "Ne m'étant pas contenté des sciences qu'on nous enseignait, j'avais parcouru tous les livres *traitant de celles qu'on estime les plus curieuses et les plus rares* qui avaient pu tomber entre mes mains" (italics mine). These books he later categorizes as the repositories of "mauvaises doctrines," dismissing them with the same vehemence as Gargantua: "...je pensais déjà connaître assez ce qu'elles valaient pour n'être plus sujet à être trompé ni par les promesses d'un alchimiste, ni par les prédictions d'un astrologue, ni par les impostures d'un magicien, ni par les artifices ou la vanterie d'aucun de ceux qui font profession de savoir plus qu'ils ne savent."

CHAPTER ONE: PART TWO

ILLUMINISM AND THE LEGACY OF NINETEENTH CENTURY HERMETIC THOUGHT

Il est des esprits d'hommes qui naissent fraternels, en des siècles différents, en des patries distantes. Hors du temps et de l'espace ils sont frères. Il peut arriver que le mystérieux destin régissant les naissances réunisse deux ou plusieurs de ceux-là sur le même point de notre ère et de notre planète. Mais normalement, la chaîne qui les lie n'est pas soumise à l'action de telles contingences. Les figures du ciel où s'inscrivent leurs impulsions natives et leurs intimes propensions portent certains signes de ressemblance, et leurs noms secrets ont, sur des lèvres plus pures que celles des humains, des sonorités correspondantes. Une même passion, un même amour les mènent, par des voies salébreuses, vers la crypte où ils verront, à travers le voile transparent, la lumière espérée.

Victor-Emile Michelet,

Les Compagnons de la Hiérophanie[1]

The pre-Romantic period, and the years 1770-1800 in particular, saw the emergence of mystics who sought their doctrine in what they believed to be purely esoteric religious dogma; Auguste Viatte has called it, "l'Eglise intérieure, qui manque de logique, mais non d'élevation d'esprit."[2] Theirs was the mysterious "Science of God", devoted to the reception of a higher light: Illuminism, literally, and Theosophy. Professing this doctrine, the pre-Romantic mystics believed in the revelation, through a process of initiation, of the arcana of a higher order. Joseph de Maistre has written that "tous ces hommes, peu satisfaits des dogmes nationaux et du culte reçu, se livrent à des recherches plus ou moins hardies sur le christianisme qu'ils nomment primitif."[3] Fabre d'Olivet affirmed that Theosophy begins where rational philosophy ends.[4] In a sense, both men may have been writing of themselves, for they were among the most genuine and articulate spokesmen of a movement which has been important in the development of literary doctrine in our century.

All definitions of Illuminism must be based on the notion of direct and divine inspiration. Their aims, in general terms, were to release the "moi intérieur" through initiation, the "divine ray" being an inherent part, they believed, of the human personality. Making the most of intuition, the Illuminists sought "cette intelligence profonde des choses qui repose sur une illumination spirituelle," as well as relations of an extraordinary nature with the archetypes of an invisible world. Their ultimate aim was to possess an intimate vision of the archetypal principles of all earthly reality.[5]

Seeking a vital and immediate communion with the hidden forces of a divine order, the Illuminists believed they held the keys to the repository of all valid wisdom. Saint-Georges de Marsais, the author of a commentary on Genesis (1738) and a contemporary of Montesquieu, seems to announce the great currents of intuitionism which marked French poetry a century later. Calling for a distinction between the processes of active reason and those of intuitive revelation, he wrote:

> Ce que j'écris, je l'écris donc comme il sort de mon fond, et c'est comme s'il y avait là un cabinet où fût un grand trésor et toutes sortes de choses rares: lorsque le Maître l'ouvre, il en tire ce qui lui plaît, et en fait ce qu'il veut, et puis le referme: veut-il que j'écrive ce qu'il en tire, alors il le montre, au moment qu'il doit être mis sur le papier, à l'intelligence qui, dans ce moment, le voit et le comprend distinctement; alors, l'entendement le reçoit, et ne le voit ni le comprend qu'à mesure que la main le trace sur le papier; c'est comme si quelqu'un lui dictait ce qu'il doit écrire, et ce quelqu'un n'est point hors de moi, il est dans mon fond.

> ...Ainsi, mon entendement, mon raisonnement n'agit, et ne réfléchit en aucune manière sur ce que j'écris; je ne puis, et il ne m'est pas permis de réfléchir aucunement sur ce que j'écris, ni de rien chercher à écrire; lorsque le fond cesse de fournir quelque chose, dès aussitôt, il faut que l'entendement cesse tout à coup; comme celui qui écrit ce qu'on lui dicte, cesse aussitôt d'écrire après avoir mis sur le papier le dernier mot qu'on lui a dicté, et il ne lui est pas permis de poursuivre à écrire.6

While this passage is characteristic of the Illuminist temper of the mid-1700's, the notion of the self as a mere instrument in the transmission of higher realities reappears in the work of the early Surrealists. While it has not been possible to prove that Breton was acquainted with the writings of de Marsais, his "definition" of the Surrealist goal, written in 1924, contains basically the same vocabulary:

> SURREALISME, n.m. Automatisme psychique pur par lequel on se propose d'exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute autre manière, le fonctionnement réel de la pensée. Dictée de la pensée, en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale.7

Armed with a powerful sense of revolt, a mystical _élan_, and an imperious individualism, the proponents of Illuminism looked beyond exoteric Church dogma to new and personal discoveries. With a certain disdain for paths already taken, they brought to literature an articulate--albeit frequently subjective--religious anxiety. On the eve of the Revolution, the Comte de Thiroux wrote to the Illuminati of Avignon:

> Je n'ai trouvé dans les Saintes Ecritures qu'incertitudes, même souvent des choses contradictoires, et peu dignes de la majesté d'un Dieu que l'on suppose les avoir dictées. Je me suis fait recevoir membre de plusieurs Loges maçonniques, espérant trouver dans les différents grades des lumières qui pouvaient m'amener à des vérités et je n'y ai trouvé que des promesses d'arriver à cette vraie lumière, sans qu'on m'ait tenu ces promesses.
>
> Si je dois en croire ce que l'on me dit de vos vertus, des vérités que vous avez découvertes et des communications que vous avez avec le Très-Haut, vous êtes à même de me tirer de mon incertitude en me donnant des preuves irrévocables de l'immortalité de l'âme. Ce serait le plus grand service que je puisse recevoir, car je préférerais cette conviction à tout ce que les hommes peuvent désirer, car à quoi peuvent servir la connaissance de la pierre philosophale, l'or potable, etc., lorsque l'on peut attendre dans l'autre vie un sort au-dessus de tous les bonheurs de celle-ci? 8

Thiroux mitigates his rhetorical question with an earnest and captivating desire for earthly certitudes; certainly his letter does not represent a gratuitous gesture in the face of a doomed soul. His disenchantment with Freemasonry is symptomatic of the age. In his Etudes sur la Franc-Maçonnerie and elsewhere, René Guénon has noted that the erosion and final dissolution of the great Order of Templars in the fourteenth century contributed to the dimming of the Enlightenment: "C'est de là que date la rupture de l'Occident avec sa propre tradition initiatique, rupture qui est véritablement la première cause de toute la déviation intellectuelle du monde moderne."[9] While Guénon may have overstated his case, we have the testimony of no less a genuine Freemason than Joseph de Maistre, who wrote in 1780: "Qu'importe à l'univers la destruction de l'Ordre des Templiers?"[10] This attitude, coupled with the general desacralization of traditional Masonry, seems to have been at the bottom of the Comte de Thiroux's disenchantment. Illuminism, he hoped, would take up the Great Work of the medieval Alchemists (the source of traditional Masonry), and become the locus for a rebirth of faith in the Occident. In Les Sources occultes du romantisme, Viatte has amalgamated passages from the writings of the Abbé de Villars, Eckartshausen, and Fournié in the following synthetic view of the Illuminist initiation:

> Tâchez, mon fils, de vous rendre digne de recevoir les lumières cabalistiques; l'heure de votre régénération est arrivée: il ne tiendra qu'à vous d'être une nouvelle créature ... Vous allez apprendre à commander à toute la nature; Dieu seul sera votre Maître, et les Sages seuls seront vos égaux. Car nous possédons la connaissance d'un lien pour nous lier avec des mondes supérieurs et pour nous rendre sensibles des sons et des choses de ces mondes supérieurs; tout le merveilleux de la nature est subordonné à la puissance de notre volonté qui est unie avec la Divinité. Le temps est passé où les ministres de Dieu nous disaient avec juste raison qu'il fallait croire ... Ce temps est remplacé par le temps actuel où chacun de nous peut dire: Je vois. 11

Rimbaud may have been familiar with these notions before he wrote his celebrated Lettre du Voyant in 1871.[12] While his biographers cannot be sure, and Rimbaud does not mention De Villars or Eckartshausen, I hope to show that certain doctrinal elements of the Illuminist vision are present in his work. The text above, containing a mood of ritual and incantation, finds its extension some years later in the writings of Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801), the Swiss philosopher, poet, and Protestant theologian whose letters to Burckhardt contain the quintessence of nineteenth-century Symbolist doctrine. In October, 1779, Lavater wrote:

> Il est une seule loi, qui traverse toutes les natures, qui les unit toutes en un tout, et cependant les sépare les unes des autres, et fait de chacune un tout particulier, un individu autonome. Chaque nature, par suite, constitue l'idée, le miroir, la copie floue ou précise de toutes les autres natures ... La nature est le grand texte, la révélation essentielle de Dieu ... mais un livre scellé sans la lumière des Ecritures, que, prises ensemble, nous appelons la révélation divine. 13

Heady language, indeed; and it was not lost on the Symbolists. Sixty years later, Baudelaire found a name for Lavater's "unique law;" he called it the Universal Analogy, related to the Swedenborgian notion of Correspondence:

> Lavater, limitant au visage de l'homme la démonstration de l'universelle vérité, nous avait traduit le sens spirituel du contour, de la forme, de la dimension. Si nous étendons la démonstration (non-seulement nous en avons le droit, mais il nous serait infiniment difficile de faire autrement), nous arrivons à cette vérité que tout est hiéroglyphique, et nous savons que les symboles ne sont obscurs que d'une manière relative, c'est-à-dire selon la pureté, la bonne volonté ou la clairvoyance native des âmes. Or, qu'est-ce qu'un poète (je prends le mot dans son acception la plus large), si ce n'est un traducteur, un déchiffreur? Chez les excellents poètes, il n'y a pas de métaphore, de comparaison ou d'épithète

> qui ne soit d'une adaptation mathématiquement exacte dans la circonstance actuelle, parce que ces comparaisons, ces métaphores et ces épithètes sont puisées dans l'inépuisable fonds de l'universelle analogie, et qu'elles ne peuvent être puisées ailleurs. 14

For the Illuminists, the earliest sacred writings became a many-faceted metaphor for Nature, their characters and language translating the most secret workings of analogy and pointing to a single archetypal principle. Behind the smoky beakers and strange equations of the medieval alchemists, enduring ideas took form, yet their metaphor (which was identical) has been obscured by empty talk of lead and gold: they named it the Great Work. Lavater's "grand texte", above, may have been the bridge to Baudelaire, who speaks of Nature, guiltless and primeval, as "un dictionnaire d'hiéroglyphes vivants...."[15] Practicing his "evocative magic" in the two primordial directions of amplitude and exaltation which, as we shall see, form the armature of Hermetic thought, Baudelaire seems to have enlarged the Illuminist view, for by including the poetic act within its sphere, he did not discount the profoundly religious element of divine revelation:

> Il n'y a rien d'intéressant sur la terre que les religions.
>
> Qu'est-ce que la religion universelle? (Chateaubriand, de Maistre, les Alexandrins, Capé.)

> Il y a une religion universelle faite pour les Alchimistes de la Pensée, une religion qui se dégage de l'homme, considéré comme mémento divin. 16

With the Illuminists, self-proclaimed depositories of the Alchemist ideal, Baudelaire was to express his need to be "anywhere out of this world." "Je m'ennuie en France," he wrote, "surtout parce que tout le monde y ressemble à Voltaire."[17] Yet his wonderful dictionary gave him new meanings for old words: "De Maistre et Edgar Poe m'ont appris à raisonner."[18] These affinities are real, and while it may not always be possible to point up direct and unequivocal influences, I hope to show that Illuminism left an important mark on French literary thought of the Romantic, Symbolist, and Surrealist periods, moments in the history of words when we were offered a privileged glimpse of the mysterious pages of the Great Work, which, having witnessed the indifference of functionaries, and the rich, reflecting love of poets, traversed the centuries to keep its fated appointment with René Guénon, in whose vision it remains.

The few historical studies of Illuminism seem to agree that the term often falls short in attempting to define the beliefs of its numerous adherents, both in France and elsewhere. The Illuminists most important to this study are among the earliest and most consistent proponents of the movement: Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, Martinès de Pasqually, Joseph de Maistre, and Fabre d'Olivet. Jakob Boehme, Swedenborg, Lavater, Willermoz, Turckheim, and a host of others have also been considered in the following pages, in an attempt to present the movement in a clear light, but this brief introduction is intended primarily as a stepping-stone to the Romantic period, which shared the most fundamental elements of Illuminism with the Symbolists and the Surrealists. Scores of names have been left out, and may be found in the erudite, difficult and painstaking works of Auguste Viatte and Alain Mercier; they deserve patience and admiration for the subject is immense, and Illuminism was not without its vulgarizers, skeptics all, whose gratuitous divinations and commerce with "spirits" found considerable popularity in the novels of Joséphin Péladan, notably Le Vice suprême (1887).

To the incredulous, the adepts of Illuminism responded with an ideal, if sometimes naive certitude. To talk of Locke, they answered Plato. Viatte has shown that "dans tous les siècles, la sympathie des illuminés va d'instinct aux représentants de l'idéalisme... S'ils admettent une tradition divine parmi les philosophes gréco-romains, les seuls mystiques en bénéficient" (I, 26). Plato was one of the undisputed masters of all Illuminist sects; from him they formed their major hypotheses: the primeval existence of the soul and of ideas, an archetypal universe corresponding to all components of vulgar (earthly) reality, and the myth of the

XUM

Androgyne. Indeed, Viatte has noted that Theosophy has its roots in the revival of Platonic ideas in the sixteenth century. Yet the single most important figure in Illuminist writings, the "Père des lumières surnaturelles, et le Grand-Prêtre des vrais Théosophes," in the words of Saint-Martin, is Jesus Christ. The Imitation de Jésus-Christ had a profound influence on the Illuminists, for "l'humilité, l'abnégation, l'abandon à la Providence charmaient des hommes fatigués de l'universelle ironie."[19] While it is difficult to formulate a perfectly coherent summary of a doctrine which recognizes such manifestly disparate ancestors, the essential armature of the Illuminist vision has been presented by Caro in his Essai sur la vie et la doctrine de Saint-Martin (1852):

> A l'origine de toutes choses, l'unité ... (Puis) l'émanation commence; elle ne s'arrêtera plus. Alors naissent ces myriades de natures intelligentes... irradiation de la vie divine... L'homme est un de ces êtres émanés... La préexistence des âmes dans cet homme-verbe, sa séparation de l'unité...; sa transformation en Dieu... Le symbolisme et la théorie des nombres, la théurgie et la possession du monde invisible par la magie ou par l'amour, complètent cet ensemble de dogmes invariables.... 20

Caro's synthetic view serves well in describing the thought of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, who was born in Amboise in 1743 and died in Châtenay in 1803. Known to himself and to history as "le Philosophe Inconnu", Saint-Martin was familiar with the works of Boehme (1575-1624), and a friend of Martinès de Pasqually, the founder of the Masonic Ordre des Elus Coens.

XUM

Replying to his German translator's request for biographical information about himself, Saint-Martin wrote a letter in 1784 in which he refers to himself in the third person, and sums up the major themes of his works. The Unknown Philosopher, states Saint-Martin, "a traité de l'origine des choses, de la dignité de l'homme primitif, de la cause finale de tous les êtres, enfin de toutes les merveilles dont l'intelligence humaine est susceptible."[21] Comparing his efforts to those of Orpheus, Saint-Martin writes that "il [Saint-Martin] célébrait dans ses hymnes sublimes la dignité des dieux et les mystères que les hiérophantes transmettaient aux initiés;" he is the brother of Pythagoras in that "il expliquait à ses disciples les lois des nombres et ... leur développait les secrets de la nature;" finally, he is Vergil, for Saint-Martin the poet "conduisait son héros dans les enfers et ... lui faisait enseigner par la Sibylle la théogonie des anciens et l'influence active et universelle du principe suprême sur tous les mondes."[22]

Saint-Martin's considerations on the distinctions which exist between sensual and intellectual Man are particularly important to our study; intellectual Man, he maintained, both contained and transfigured the Man of senses, elevating him to a position of active participation in the discovery and examination of the principles of absolute unity. Writing of himself in the third person, Saint-Martin expresses his displeasure with the Enlightenment and the reforms he would bring to it:

> Il a surtout appuyé sur la distinction importante de l'homme physique et de l'homme intellectuel qui composent aujourd'hui notre existence, parce qu'il a été vivement affecté des injures que la philosophie moderne faisait à la noblesse de notre être pensant, en le confondant avec les brutes; et il a montré qu'on pouvait accorder à la philosophie que nos pensées nous viennent par les organes des sens et n'être pas obligés pour cela de lui céder que nos sens en fussent les générateurs. 23

Thus our ears, Saint-Martin states, channel the words which are spoken to us, yet do not produce nor do they take part in the ideas which those words create. In a luminous passage which is worth quoting at length, Saint-Martin expresses his anguish at the divided state of modern Man, trapped in rationalistic distinctions and philosophical dualism which hide from him the vision of unity:

> Il a fait sentir que cet état mixte, qui nous compose aujourd'hui, étant opposé à l'idée simple de l'unité dont nous sommes travaillés intérieurement, n'avait pu être notre état primitif, et qu'il était en même temps la cause de ce trouble, de ce désir de connaître, de ces ténèbres et de cette ignorance, où la famille humaine flotte comme sur une mer agitée et sans rivage. Il a néanmoins fait voir que cette unité dont nous sommes si éloignés tendait à se rapprocher de nous dans toutes ses oeuvres, qu'elle avait uni toutes les sciences et lié toute la nature par un même principe, afin que ce flambeau servit de guide à notre intelligence, au milieu des altérations et des désordres qui sont également visibles pour nous dans la nature. Il a fait voir que cette unité suprême avait fait à l'homme des présents encore plus précieux, en lui donnant de temps en temps des

> signes plus directs de sa présence. Il a montré que toutes les traditions mythologiques et religieuses, quelque défigurées qu'elles fussent, étaient autant de témoignages de ces faveurs partielles de la Divinité pour l'homme, et que ces mêmes faveurs avaient dû être sensibles sur la terre en divers temps et en divers lieux, parce que s'il est vrai que les choses se passent par nos sens avant d'arriver à notre intelligence, comment des idées si majestueuses et si consòlantes auraient-elles pu naître dans notre esprit et dans le coeur de l'homme, si ces sens n'en avaient jamais été frappés? Il s'est plu à enseigner que cette unité suprême ayant spécialement l'homme en vue, ne considérait toute l'espèce humaine que comme une seule famille et engageait par là les humains à se regarder comme des frères. 24

Saint-Martin's project, as well as its accomplishment noted above, were perhaps too ambitious in an age where skeptics had taken charge of formulating doctrine. The assertions contained in these supposedly ex post facto declarations, however, point up in synthetic form the interest of an era in the occult. As the father of Martinism and one of the more articulate Illuminists, Saint-Martin exercised an important influence on the direction which Illuminism was to take in the following century.

Saint-Martin's friend, Martinès de Pasqually, was less well-known in his time, and appears enigmatic in the history books. Viatte concludes that with Pasqually's death in 1774, the Masonic order he had founded "ne lui survit guère" (I, 50). Believing that each man is born a prophet, Pasqually called for the assiduous cultivation of the gift of vision.

He was, Turckheim wrote to Willermoz in August, 1821, "en communication avec des êtres différents de ceux qui habitent la terre."[25] Papus (pseudonym of Gérard Encausse), Pasqually's biographer and disciple, stated some fifty years later that Pasqually had the ability to cure physical ills through Theurgy, and was the repository of the secrets of the Alchemists' Great Work.[26] Papus has indicated that Pasqually practiced his miracles as a devout Christian. The distinctions Papus makes between Christian and "other" magic are characteristic of an important mid-nineteenth century conviction: magic and ritual per se were no longer in doubt; only their quality was. Christian magic was legitimate, Papus wrote, for its basis was a holy fervor:

> Martinès faisait venir dans la salle des séances ceux qui lui demandaient la lumière. Il traçait les cercles rituéliques, il écrivait les paroles sacrées, il priait avec humilité et ferveur, agissant toujours au nom du Christ.
>
> Alors, les êtres invisibles apparaissaient, toujours en pleine lumière. Ces êtres agissaient et parlaient: ils donnaient des enseignements élevés, invitaient à la prière et au recueillement, et cela, sans médiums endormis, sans extases ni hallucinations maladives. 27

Papus writes with a certain nostalgia of those good days; his Martinésisme et Franc-Maçonnerie (1899) is an illuminating and highly personal account of the finest moments of the Illuminist movement. With little attention to historical detail,[28] but with a great deal of genuine sympathy for the state of occult practice at the turn of the nineteenth century, Papus seems to have echoed the disenchantment of Baudelaire, who wrote at the time: "Il appartenait à une société incrédule d'envoyer Robert Houdin chez les Arabes pour les détourner des miracles."[29] The daring "exposés" of the well-known magician may not have replaced a sense of the miraculous in the North African villages he visited, but Baudelaire's point is well taken: in a skeptical age, few had cared to accept the legitimate psychological elements of the Illuminist doctrine. Sébastien Mercier was an exception when he wrote of his strange contemporaries in 1783 that "ils vivent dans la plus rigoureuse continence, jeûnent jusqu'à tomber dans le marasme, se procurent ainsi des rêves extatiques et éloignent toutes impressions terrestres, afin de laisser à l'âme une liberté plus entière et une communication plus facile avec le centre de vérité."[30]

An avowed adversary of theologians as well as of materialists, Saint-Martin had much in common with Martinès de Pasqually. His letters to Willermoz in 1776 are ample evidence of the admiration the Unknown Philosopher had for Pasqually.[31] Slowly, the circle of Martinists grew; Kirchberger, Eckartshausen, Willermoz, Gleichen, Turckheim, all were united in a common desire to sharpen contemporary minds dulled by notions of material progress. Allegories reminiscent of those of classical antiquity abound in their writings, yet the protagonists are strange combinations of the divine and the human, the sacred and the profane. Man's religion in its primeval state, wrote Saint-Martin, "...était de porter continuellement sa vue depuis l'Orient jusqu'à l'Occident et depuis le Nord jusqu'au Midi, c'est-à-dire de déterminer les làtitudes et les longitudes dans toutes les parties de l'univers."[32] The "latitudes" and "longitudes" here correspond to the primordial directions of Amplitude and Exaltation in Hermetic thought. The first term refers to the earth, conceived in terms of horizontality, and representing the wordly or contingent plane. The second corresponds to the heavens, evoking verticality, and symbolizing Man's search for the absolute. The union of the two, the traditional "center of centers", is the symbol of true wisdom; he who achieves identity with the "center of centers" participates in the privileged moment of oneness with the universe.

Paradoxically, it was in the active atmosphere of Saint-Martin's illuminism that Swedenborg's "quiétisme" was born. Entrusted with the sacred mission of building the New Jerusalem, Swedenborg saw passivity as the only possible mortar, and a fundamental refusal of initiative as the best material of construction. Swedenborg was a mystic in the traditional sense, holding to the passive reception of a higher light. The Theosophists, who praised Swedenborg enthusiastically as a visionary, were thwarted by the manifest practical differences between his doctrine and their own. The Celestial Arcana were a challenge which could not be met, for the early Illuminists could not be passive in the face of the "higher order" which they sought.

A devout Martinist and one of the most eloquent of Illuminists, Joseph de Maistre has left his mark on the great revival of occultism in the nineteenth century. Eliphas Lévi has noted repeatedly, in his Histoire de la Magie (1860) that de Maistre had "turned his eyes instinctively towards the last sanctuaries of occultism...."[33] Widely read, de Maistre was careful to enunciate a doctrine which was as little fanciful as was possible at the time: Emile Dermenghem has pointed out that de Maistre's research in esoterism revealed to him the fact that "le Christianisme dans les premiers temps était une vraie initiation où l'on dévoilait une véritable magie blanche."[34] Hebrew esoteric doctrine had revealed to de Maistre allegorical meanings which constituted "une véritable et respectable cabale, dont la moderne n'est qu'une fille illégitime et contrefaite."[35]

With his interest in traditional Masonry, Joseph de Maistre envisaged the Great Work of the Alchemists as the harmonious cooperation of all Churches. Only a secret, initiatic society, he believed, could accomplish this, and it was in this spirit that he was one of the last great Masons of the eighteenth century. With his exile, the Masonic tradition in France was doomed.

Deploring religious individualism, de Maistre regarded Plato as the first human manifestation of the Gospel. In 1780, he wrote that he had admired "Martino Pasqualès [sic], qui vécut jadis assez longtemps en France, et qui mourut en Amérique il y a peut-être quarante ans."[36] His friendship with Jean-Baptiste Willermoz was helpful in introducing de Maistre to Saint-Martin, the celebrated Unknown Philosopher, whose humble name could not withstand the lie given it by Saint-Martin's monumental ego. Madame Swetchine, de Maistre's most cherished convert to Illuminism, summed up their attitude toward him when she wrote, commenting on Saint-Martin's Pensées:

> Plusieurs d'entre elles m'ont paru élevées, intérieures et profondes, vraies, par conséquent... Néanmoins, on croit quelquefois traverser comme des couches d'erreur ... on sent qu'elles n'ont pas été dictées par la piété pure et simple, mais par une théosophie toujours un peu glorieuse. Aussi c'est Saint-Martin qui a trouvé Dieu et non pas Dieu qui a visité Saint-Martin ... L'orgueil perce jusque dans son effroi de la corruption. 37

Adapting from Saint Paul's epistles, de Maistre summed up the Theosophic vision of the world as a system of invisible phenomena manifested visibly. He held the Number to be sacred, for "Dieu nous a donné le nombre, et c'est par le nombre qu'il se révèle à nous ... Je ne crois qu'au nombre; c'est le signe, c'est la voix, c'est la parole de l'intelligence; et comme il est partout, je le vois partout."[38] In a very important sense, this was the process of "reasoning" which Baudelaire states he learned from Joseph de Maistre. On the eve of our century, Baudelaire wrote: "Tout est nombre. Le nombre est dans tout. Le nombre est dans l'individu."[39] Baudelaire evokes Fabre d'Olivet later, in writing of the relationship between music and space: "La musique donne l'idée de l'espace. Tous les arts, plus ou moins; puisqu'ils sont nombre et que le nombre est une traduction de l'espace."[40] For de Maistre, all notions of space--indeed, all earthly phenomena--participated and found their meaning in the number three. To his imaginary "correspondent", the alter-ego he addresses as the Senator, he writes in Soirées:

> Souvenez-vous, Monsieur le Sénateur, de ce que vous me dites un jour, d'après vos amples recueils sur le nombre trois en particulier: il est écrit dans les astres, sur la terre; dans l'intelligence de l'homme, dans son corps; dans la fable, dans l'Evangile, dans le Talmud, dans les Védas, dans toutes les cérémonies religieuses, antiques ou modernes, légitimes ou illégitimes, aspersions, ablutions, invocations, exorcismes, charmes, magie noire ou blanche; dans les mystères de la cabale, de la théurgie, de l'alchimie, de toutes les sociétés secrètes ... en un mot, dans tout ce qui existe. On dira, peut-être, c'est le hasard: allons donc! 41

The universe, de Maistre believed, reflected the primeval Triad, which he has spoken of in terms of the Christian Trinity.[42] Finding that Pantheism tended to exaggerate and corrupt this notion of universal harmony, de Maistre was wary of it, espousing instead the spiritualism of the Martinists:

"Le monde physique n'est qu'une image ou, si vous voulez, une répétition du monde spirituel; et l'on peut étudier l'un dans l'autre alternativement."[43] With Cazotte, de Maistre saw contemporary French society as a beast, the Revolution as a palpable manifestation of Satan; yet de Maistre added: "J'y vois un arrêt de la Providence."[44]

Madame de Staël met Joseph de Maistre in 1793; Viatte has shown that de Maistre's influence is clear in her later writings, and that by the early years of the next century, Madame de Staël's mysticism contained the most important elements of the Illuminist doctrine. In 1815, in a letter to Gérando, she wrote: "Je crois le mysticisme, ... qui joint l'amour aux oeuvres, je le crois une réformation de la *Réformation*, un développement du christianisme, qui réunit ce qu'il y a de bon dans le catholicisme et le protestantisme, et qui sépare entièrement la religion de l'influence politique des prêtres."[45] Madame de Staël's syncretism seems to have been acceptable to the Illuminists: Viatte notes an extraordinary passage in *De l'Allemagne*, in which the author refers to "le côté nocturne de la nature," the title of a work by the Theosophist G.H. von Schubert. The passage sums up the Illuminist doctrine:

> Ce que nous appelons des erreurs et des superstitions tenait peut-être à des lois de l'univers qui nous sont encore inconnues. Les rapports des planètes avec les métaux, l'influence de ces rapports, les oracles

> même et les présages ne pourraient-ils pas avoir pour cause des puissances occultes dont nous n'avons plus aucune idée? Et qui sait s'il n'y a pas un germe de vérité caché dans tous les apologues, dans toutes les croyances, qu'on a flétries du nom de folie? Il ne s'ensuit pas assurément qu'il faille renoncer à la méthode expérimentale, si nécessaire dans les sciences. Mais pourquoi ne donnerait-on pas pour guide suprême à cette méthode une philosophie plus étendue, qui embrasserait l'univers dans son ensemble et ne mépriserait pas le côté nocturne de la nature, en attendant qu'on puisse y répandre de la clarté? 46

The author's rhetorical question is strongly reminiscent of that which was asked--with a touch more of a sense of loss, perhaps--by the Comte de Thiroux in his letter to the Illuminist brethren of Avignon.

With the Empire, Illuminism lost in popularity what it had gained in the hearty approbation of Madame de Staël. Not one of the great writers of the period ignored completely the fundamental tenets of the doctrine, but many turned away from them: "Lasses de vagabonder, bien des âmes retournent au dogme; elles se déprennent des expériences nuageuses, et leur sentiment s'appuiera volontiers sur des théories concrètes."[47] Viatte observes that the last Voltairian offensive seems to have won the day: "Reason" rules, and the example of the Ancients is the new order. While numerous Theosophic ideas seemed to announce a Bonald (Saint-Martin and the theory of language; the mystic's admission of a primitive revelation, transmitted via tradition; the theory of numbers), "tout, dans le caractère et dans la pensée de Bonald, se rebelle contre l'illuminisme. Il envisage le monde en homme de loi."[48]

While Chateaubriand does not completely ignore the Illuminists, he tends to hold up the notion of the magus for its poetic value alone. Le Génie du Christianisme contains precious references to Theosophy, not the least important of which is the author's brilliant discourse on the Ternary:

> Nous croyons entrevoir dans la nature même une sorte de preuve physique de la Trinité. Elle est l'archétype de l'univers ou, si l'on veut, sa divine charpente. Ne serait-il pas possible que la forme extérieure et materielle participât de l'arche intérieure et spirituelle qui la soutient, de même que Platon représentait les choses corporelles comme l'ombre des pensées de Dieu? Le nombre Trois semble être dans la nature le terme par excellence. Le Trois n'est point engendré, et engendre toutes les autres fractions, ce qui le faisait appeler le nombre sans mère par Pythagore. 49

Despite the fact that Saint-Martin considered Chateaubriand to have been "le seul homme de lettres honnête avec qui je me sois trouvé en présence depuis que j'existe,"[50] the author of Atala and René saw no possibility of legitimate spiritual rebirth in Illuminism; to him, these were mere visionaries, unworthy of the good sense explicit in Le Génie du Christianisme:

> Les conjurations, la nécromancie ne sont, chez le peuple, que l'instinct de la religion, et une des preuves les plus frappantes de la nécessité d'un culte. On est bien près de tout croire quand on ne croit rien; on a des devins

> quand on n'a plus de prophètes, des sortilèges quand on renonce aux cérémonies religieuses, et l'on ouvre les antres des sorciers quand on ferme les temples du Seigneur. 51

Had he written these words thirty years later, Chateaubriand could not have been closer to the truth; in the mid-eighteen hundreds, however, the statement betrays his idiosyncracies, his prejudices, as well as a surprising shortsightedness.[52] At any rate, the Illuminists had little hope of success with such intransigent orthodoxy; Viatte observes that they will receive "une audience plus favorable auprès d'âmes désorientées ou sceptiques...." (II, 138). Sénancour's Rêveries and Oberman, Charles Nodier's Mélanges will find their inspiration in Illuminist doctrine, and their solitary authors will recall the certitudes and anguish of Saint-Martin and Pasqually. Fabre d'Olivet's Theosophic erudition impressed Sénancour, as did the Pythagorian preoccupations of the Martinists. On the theory of numbers and the doctrine of analogy and correspondence, Oberman offers some brilliant indications of the Illuminist presence:

> Le nombre est le principe de toute dimension, de toute harmonie, de toute propriété, de toute agrégation; il est la loi de l'univers organisé.
>
> Sans les lois des nombres, la matière serait une masse informe, indigeste; elle serait le chaos. La matière arrangée selon ces lois est le monde. La nécessité de ces lois est le destin: leur puissance et leurs propriétés sont la nature, et la conception universelle de ces propriétés est Dieu.

> Les analogies de ces propriétés forment la doctrine magique, secret de toutes les initiations, principe de tous les dogmes, base de tous les cultes, source des relations morales et de tous les devoirs.
>
> Je me hâte, et vous me saurez gré de tant de discrétion, car je pourrais suivre la filiation de toutes les idées cabalistiques et religieuses. 53

The number Three was the symbol of perfection, Sénancour believed; One was the principle, which, having been disturbed by dualism, Two, needed Three to reinstate it in all its glory; Sénancour's reasoning is not as fanciful as it seems, as we shall see in our examination of Fabre d'Olivet's more serious considerations on the theory of numbers. Sénancour writes:

> L'Unité est assurément le principe...
>
> Pour Deux, c'est très différent. S'il n'y avait pas deux, il n'y aurait qu'un. Or, quand tout est un, tout est semblable; quand tout est semblable, il n'y a pas de discordance; là où il n'y a pas de discordance, là est la perfection; c'est donc deux qui brouille tout. Voilà le mauvais principe, c'est Satan....
>
> Cependant, sans deux, il n'y aurait point de composition, point de rapports, point d'harmonie. Deux est l'élément de toute chose composée en tant que composée. Deux est le symbole et le moyen de toute génération.
>
> Trois est le principe de la perfection; c'est le nombre de la chose composée et ramenée à l'unité, de la chose élevée à l'agrégation, et achevée par l'unité.... 54

While Nodier's relations with the Illuminists are less clear, Viatte has shown marked affinities with their doctrine, notably in *Le Dernier banquet des Girondins*, *Jean Sbogar*, and *Mademoiselle de Marsan*. "Nodier emprunte surtout aux mystiques leurs attitudes les plus connues et les plus *voyantes*. Il trouve chez eux une mine inépuisable de récits fantastiques: sa curiosité se plaît à l'impossible; il ne va guère au delà" (II, 167). With Nodier, and with his contemporaries, Theosophy and the Illuminist doctrine become a parlor pastime, a source of unlimited speculations, many of them fantastic, and a domain where, like literature itself, anything is possible. With Nodier, writes Viatte, Theosophy "quitte les cénacles et s'adapte à la littérature: le temps approche où ses doctrines et son histoire, déformées, alimenteront les romans d'aventure d'Alexandre Dumas ou de George Sand" (II, 167).

Fabre d'Olivet (1768-1825) did not come to Illuminism until 1805. Immersed in linguistic theory, he was anxious to reconstruct the primitive armature of language: his *Langue hébraïque restituée* (1815) defined Divinity as "le principe éternel de la Parole."[55] In the antediluvian ages, Fabre maintained, Man spoke Borean, Sudean, Celtic and Atlantic; from these four idioms all others derived, passing through three mother languages: Hebrew, Sanskrit, and Chinese. From these assertions, Viatte has concluded that "Fabre d'Olivet, le premier, déplace vers l'Asie le centre de l'histoire et de la sagesse humaine" (II, 171). With Fabre, Ballanche later declared that there was fundamental identity "des idées métaphysiques qui reposent au fond des doctrines indiennes avec celles qui sont enfermées dans les écrits de nos théosophes modernes."[56]

Seeing Man as the mediator between Providence and Destiny, Fabre d'Olivet conceived of all phenomena, substantial as well as transcendental, as functions of these three forces; God, who forms the quaternary, contains them without being contained by them. From this fundament, Fabre reasoned, comes our triple life: "instinctive, animique, intellectuelle." From this tripartite principle, derives the predominance of Will, which must determine our convictions, for "la raison seule, de quelques talents qu'elle soit accompagnée, ne peut manquer de nous conduire au néant."[57] And again:

> La Volonté, évertuée par la foi, pouvait subjuguer la Nécessité elle-même, commander à la Nature, et opérer des miracles. Elle était le principe sur lequel reposait la magie des disciples de Zoroastre. Jésus, en disant paraboliquement qu'au moyen de la foi on pouvait ébranler les montagnes, ne faisait que suivre la tradition théosophique connue de tous les âges. 58

The principle of universal analogy finds an eloquent expression in Fabre d'Olivet's Vers dorés de Pythagore expliqués (1813); all sciences, he maintained, those of the Magus included, are based on a single unifying law of harmony; there is, he stated, "une analogie parfaite entre le ciel et la terre, l'intelligible et le sensible, la substance indivisible et la substance divisible; de manière que ce qui se passe dans une des régions de l'univers, ou des modifications du ternaire primordial est l'image exacte de ce qui se passe dans l'autre."[59]

Fabre d'Olivet wrote La Langue hébraïque restituée between 1805 and 1811. The full title of this extraordinary work may enlighten the reader on the immense task the author had set for himself:

> La Langue hébraïque restituée, et le véritable sens des mots hébreux rétabli et prouvé par leur analyse radicale. Ouvrage dans lequel on trouve réunis: 1° Une dissertation introductive sur l'origine de la Parole, l'étude des langues qui peuvent y conduire, et le but que l'Auteur s'est proposé; 2° Une grammaire hébraïque, fondée sur de nouveaux principes, et rendue utile à l'étude des langues en général; 3° Une série de Racines hébraïques, envisagées sous des rapports nouveaux, et destinées à faciliter l'intelligence du langage, et celle de la science étymologique; 4° Un Discours Préliminaire; 5° Une traduction en français des dix premiers chapitres du Sépher, contenant la Cosmogonie de Moyse. Cette traduction destinée à servir de preuve aux principes posés dans la grammaire et dans le dictionnaire, est précédée d'une version littérale, en français et en anglais, faite sur le texte hébreu présenté en original avec une transcription en caractères modernes, et accompagnée de notes grammaticales et critiques où l'interprétation donnée à chaque mot est prouvée par son analyse radicale, et sa confrontation avec le mot analogue samaritain, chaldaïque, syriaque, arabe, ou grec, par Fabre d'Olivet. 60

Admittedly an ambitious project, and one that would do justice to a man who hoped one day to write a history of the world. Indeed, it was with thoughts of such a history that Fabre engaged in the creation of the above work, for in attempting to trace the origins of Mankind, he ran afoul of the sources of language. Taking up Rousseau's notion of language as a convention, and later that of Saint-Martin, which was substantially the same, d'Olivet wondered how such a convention could have been established without language. Commenting on the arguments of Hobbes, he observed that "tous nos modernes savants ont prétendu qu'il n'y a rien qui ne soit arbitraire dans l'institution de la parole."[61] As for Locke and Condillac, the problem of the origins of language was at best tangential. In Fabre d'Olivet (Paris, 1953), Léon Cellier has pointed out that for the empiricists, analysis must feed upon itself so as to find its meanings; the criticism of this method, from Fabre's point of view, was implicit in its definition: "Il ne suffit pas de démonter une montre pour rendre raison de son mouvement," Cellier writes; "Une analyse ne nous fait connaître ni l'origine, ni le but, ni la nature intime, ni le principe du langage" (p. 134). It was to vindicate this criticism, essentially, that Fabre d'Olivet engaged in his "restitution" of the Hebraic language.

The theological assertion that Man was created with the gift of language--the Hebrew language--was fanciful to say the least, and abused of the good will of genuine myth-makers. Yet Fabre could not dispense, in his remarkable vision, with the sacred origins of language. Cellier writes: "On peut être de ceux que 'la prière a conduits à la méditation sur l'origine du langage', selon les belles paroles du poète Milosz, et en admettre l'origine divine, sans renoncer à une attitude scientifique. Telle sera la position de Fabre d'Olivet" (p. 134). Believing that the Orient was the source of the light of wisdom, Fabre held that "on ne doit chercher l'origine de la Parole que sur des monuments authentiques, où la Parole elle-même ait laissé son empreinte ineffacable."[62] These monuments, Fabre believed, were in the form of sacred literature, which he held three languages to possess to the exclusion of all others: the Chinese books of universal principles (King), the Sanskrit books of divine science (Védas), and the Hebrew Sépher of Moses. As is clear in the title, La Langue hébraïque restituée considers but one of these three primordial languages, the author not having had, in his words, "le temps et les secours nécessaires" to be more ambitious, and finding Hebrew to be the most accessible to his readers. Fabre's reasons are understated, for Napoleon was not sympathetic to the author, and prevented the publication of his work.

Seeing all symbols as signs which in turn are palpable manifestations of ideas, Fabre d'Olivet held that the noun (name) was the first product of the idea. Cellier sums up this notion: "Tout signe manifesté au dehors est d'abord un nom; mais ensuite ce nom est caractérisé par une figure et produit un signe. Le signe ne reçoit donc cette figure symbolique que parce qu'il renferme déjà l'idée. Le caractère présente abstractivement à la pensée la faculté des objets qu'il désigne" (p. 137). While Cellier's résumé of Fabre's starting-point may seem too logical, it has the merit of leading the reader to a central hypothesis of Fabre's writings, which is at the very core of the Symbolist doctrine. In a note, Fabre writes:

> Toutes les fois que l'homme veut exprimer une pensée intellectuelle et morale, il est obligé de se servir d'un instrument physique, et de prendre dans la nature élémentaire des objets matériels, qu'il spiritualise pour ainsi dire, en les faisant passer, par le moyen de la métaphore ou du hiéroglyphe, d'une région dans l'autre. 63

Human language, by virtue of this sacred element, thus becomes the symbolic manifestation of the first dictum of the Emerald Table, attributed to Hermes Trismegistos.[64] This is the central element of the doctrine of correspondences which was to find its expression in Symbolist poetry. The doctrine is clearly present in Fabre d'Olivet's Histoire philosophique du Genre humain (1824); indeed, it is the central idea of that work, as the following brief summary of Fabre's considerations of Man, Destiny and Providence will hopefully show. I should add that the same doctrine is examined by René Guénon in La Grande Triade (1946), which amplifies the initial study to include the two other traditions which Fabre d'Olivet does not treat: Chinese and Hindu.

Man, Fabre believed, is the mediator between the two forces of Destiny and Providence; Destiny, "nature nécessitée et naturée" (passive), is below him, while Providence, "nature libre et naturante" (active), is above. Man, a member of the intuitive hominal reign, is "la volonté médiatrice, la force efficiente, placée entre ces deux natures pour leur servir de lien, de moyen de communication, et réunir deux actions, deux mouvements, qui seraient incompatibles sans lui." The totality of these three interrelated forces, according to Fabre, constitute the "universal terrain"; nothing is beyond their action except God who, uniting them and containing them, forms with them the sacred quaternary "qui est tout dans tout, et hors duquel il n'est rien." The first three forces, which Fabre held to be primordial principles, are difficult to define ("on ne saurait jamais définir un principe"), but may be known by their actions, for they do not leave the sphere where individual man is enclosed as the symbol of Universal Man. God, on the other hand, cannot be known, for He is Absolute Being, containing the forces of Universal Man and his earthly paradigm without being contained by them. Thus without seeking to sound this infinite essence which is God, Fabre asks, "cherchons à connaître le puissant ternaire dans lequel il se réfléchit: la Providence, l'Homme et le Destin."[65]

Destiny is the inferior, instinctive element in Universal Nature; its action is fatality, manifested to Man through necessity, which relates causes to effects. The reigns of elementary nature, mineral, vegetable and animal, are the domain of Destiny; thus:

> Au moment où l'homme arrive sur la terre, il appartient au Destin, qui l'entraîne longtemps dans le tourbillon de la fatalité. Mais quoique plongé dans ce tourbillon, et d'abord soumis à son influence comme tous les êtres élémentaires, il porte en lui un germe divin qui ne saurait jamais se confondre entièrement avec lui. Ce germe, réactionné par le Destin lui-même, se développe pour s'y opposer. C'est une étincelle de la volonté divine, qui, participant à la vie universelle, vient dans la nature élémentaire pour y ramener l'harmonie. 66

Providence, on the other hand, is the superior, intelligent element of Universal Nature. It is a living, divine law, from which all principles come, as well as all causes. The aim of Providence, Fabre states, "est la perfection de tous les êtres; et cette perfection, elle en reçoit de Dieu même le type irréfragable." Where time and form may vary, Providence is absolute and depends on neither, but plants in Man an element of the divine in the face of Destiny's fatality, "afin de la changer [fatality] et de s'en rendre maîtresse au moyen de la volonté de cet être médiane."[67]

On this highly theoretical representation of Man as the median force which unites in itself the vicissitudes and harmonies of both superior (providential) and inferior principles, Fabre d'Olivet reconstructs the original armature of the earliest sacred writings. This was the mythological conception of Man in the Vedic and Taoist sacred texts, as well as the doctrine of Pythagoras. Fabre d'Olivet was the first Occidental thinker to have revived the primordial notion of Man as the palpable manifestation of the three principles of Providence, Destiny, and Will: the mighty Ternary in which was reflected the divine Presence. Man as form, Fabre maintained, belongs to the temporal domain; indeed, time itself is a succession of forms. Only essences are indestructible, for they emanate from a single principle: Absolute Essence, which cannot pass on, for to conceive of passage, one must conceive of space, and this cannot be done outside of Absolute Space. One must therefore distinguish between form and essence; between time and space; between "relative" eternity and its absolute principle. Form, Time, "relative" Eternity are emanations. Essence, Space, Absolute Eternity are divine identities. Everything which constitutes these identities, Fabre held, is immutable; everything which belongs to those emanations may change. Forms, succeeding each other, engender Time; Time in turn engenders "relative" Eternity; but this eternity, and the time which measures it, and the forms which inhabit it, all are included equally in the Essence which engenders form, in the Space which creates time, and in the Absolute Eternity which envelops "relative" eternity.[68]

In their Anthologie littéraire de l'occultisme (1950), Amadou and Kanters reserve a significant place for Fabre d'Olivet, publishing several luminous pages from his Histoire philosophique. Cellier has argued that while Fabre's language announces ("on ne le sait pas assez") that of Claudel, "[il] n'a jamais été qu'un théoricien" (p. 397). I would submit, in turn, that they share more than language: both Fabre d'Olivet and Claudel were poets, whose vision consisted in the elaboration and lyrical transmission of primeval myths. Fabre's Souvenirs, Cellier has observed, are the most "literary" of his numerous writings. This may be so, although all of the Souvenirs have yet to be found and published.[69] Fabre's other writings, especially Les Vers dorés and L'Histoire philosophique, attest to a compelling creative vision which, in supplying intuition to primeval signs, gives to his writing the stature of myth and of the higher arcana with which the poetic experience is imbued. Of Fabre's speculations and their relationship to the poetic experience, André Tanner has written:

> Il n'y a pas de doute possible: il offre, sur le plan de l'idée, le pendant exact de l'expérience poétique des cent dernières années. Il n'y a pas, quant à la langue, d'intuition, d'affirmation éparse chez les plus grands poètes qui ne trouve sa justification dans le système qu'il avait conçu en philosophe, et dont le linguiste en lui s'efforca de fournir une démonstration par le fait. 70

The Symbolist esthetic finds one of its earliest enunciators in Fabre d'Olivet; with Saint-Martin and Ballanche, he seems to provide the doctrinal link between Romantic and

Symbolist poetry, announcing Nerval, and preparing the way for Baudelaire, Rimbaud, as well as the Surrealists. Breton's Arcane 17 has consecrated Fabre's doctrine and language, finding in them those exceptional moments of intuition which, coupled with a profound sense of revolt, constitute the core of the Surrealist vision.[71] Breton has taken up the theme of the Logos in its metaphorical and sacred relationship with the tree, a relationship which is rooted in Fabre d'Olivet's Langue hébraïque restituée:

> Ainsi que [l'arbre], [la Parole] a son germe. Ainsi que lui, elle jette ses racines en petit nombre, dans une nature féconde dont les éléments sont inconnus; ainsi que lui, elle rompt ses liens, elle s'élève, elle échappe aux ténèbres terrestres, elle s'élance dans des régions nouvelles où, comme lui, aspirant à un élément plus pur, abreuvée d'une lumière divine, elle étend ses rameaux et les couvre de fleurs et de fruits. 72

Cellier has stated that "l'époque symboliste est celle où la gloire posthume de Fabre d'Olivet atteint son apogée" (p. 383). The poetic experience, and most notably that of the later Romantics and the early Symbolists, as I hope to show, shares with the rebirth of esoterism and the occult in the eighteenth century the same Weltanschauung: it is, as Michaud has stated, "un effort pour retrouver la doctrine traditionnelle, celle qui est à la base de toutes les philosophies antiques et des grandes religions, et dont les échos affaiblis sont parvenus jusqu'à nous."[73] Cellier's research has yielded the precious information that from Baudelaire to Claudel, including Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Villiers de l'Isle Adam and others, the new poetic visionaries had acquainted themselves well with the writings of Fabre d'Olivet and with the Theosophic doctrine.

Fabre d'Olivet's death at 56 on March 27, 1825, is still a mystery. He was found clothed in a long ceremonial robe, stretched out on the altar he had in his home, with a dagger in his chest. Detractors, among them representatives of strict Catholic orthodoxy, saw an ignoble death much like that of the Comte de Gabalis, although the latter had died of apoplexy. Others, toward the turn of the century, saw a suicide prompted by religious guilt. Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, in l'Archéomètre, declared: "Quant à Fabre d'Olivet, il se poignarda. On ne renie pas en vain le christianisme."[74] Fabre des Essarts went a step further in declaring that Fabre's was a ritual suicide.[75] In a letter to Cellier a half century later, René Guénon stated: "J'ai toujours eu des doutes sur le suicide de Fabre d'Olivet, qui, en réalité pourrait très bien avoir été un assassinat."[76]

Léon Cellier has hinted at the fundamental doctrinal similarities which exist between Fabre d'Olivet and René Guénon. Indeed, a chapter of Cellier's work is titled after one of Guénon's most important works, La Grande Triade (pp. 263-293). Cellier has written: "Il est indispensable de se reporter à cet ouvrage ... si l'on veut étudier les rapports de la triade de Fabre d'Olivet avec les triades traditionnelles" (p. 267). In this light, and on the basis of numerous other doctrinal similarities, Cellier has called Fabre d'Olivet "un authentique précurseur de René Guénon" (p. 297).

Léon Cellier has noted that many of Fabre d'Olivet's notions on linguistic history are adapted from Le Monde primitif of Court de Gibelin [Fabre d'Olivet (Paris, 1953), p. 148]. In "Remarques sur la langue moderniste en France" (in press, Français Moderne), Karl D. Uitti has shown that a fundamental legacy of late Enlightenment linguistic theory--the notion of "creation through deformation"--is at the basis of Symbolist expression. "Déchiffrer c'est créer et, pour Proust comme pour Gourmont, toute création implique une déformation" (p. 6). Gourmont's L'Esthétique de la langue française (1898-9), and Proust's Le Temps retrouvé, among other works, suggest that "le Modernisme littéraire exploite poétiquement des doctrines qui, sous une forme théorique et analytique, remontent à un groupe important de penseurs et de grammairiens du dix-huitième siècle" (p. 10). This study points up the important role played in the development of the "modernist rhetoric" by Condillac [Traité des systèmes (1749)], DuMarsais [Traité des tropes (1730)], and Bonald [Recherches philosophiques sur les premiers objets des connoissances morales (1818)]. Condillac, writes Professor Uitti, "se méfiait du jargon des grands systèmes philosophiques et ... préférait toujours les poètes aux métaphysiciens" (p. 13).

Before Rousseau's notions on the "superior imagination," he observes, "Condillac définit le rôle dans l'expression, de ce qu'on pourrait appeler la logique des passions." Quoting some germane lines from Condillac's De l'Art d'écrire (I, i), he underlines the eighteenth-century influences on Symbolist expression (Gourmont, Mallarmé, Ghil, Valéry, among others). Condillac wrote:

> Si nous réfléchissons sur nous-même, nous remarquerons que nos idées se présentent dans un ordre qui change suivant les sentiments dont nous sommes affectés. Telle dans une occasion nous frappe vivement, qui se fait à peine apercevoir dans une autre. De-là naissent autant de manières de concevoir une même chose, que nous éprouvons successivement d'espèces de passions. Vous comprenez donc que, si nous conservons cet ordre dans le discours, nous communiquerons nos sentiments en communiquant nos idées.

With the "esthétisme" whose dangers Bonald, among others, would warn against later, Condillac's writings are harbingers of a very modern attitude towards language. "La libre créativité et l'authenticité du langage, ainsi qu'une certaine rigueur," Professor Uitti notes, "se situeront au coeur même de l'activité poétique moderniste" (p. 21). With DuMarsais, "language" and "mediation" are "indissolublement associés, car dans leur association réside la seule 'justesse' possible.... La rigueur du Livre mallarméen ou proustien reflète décidément celle de la grammaire de DuMarsais" (p. 24). In attempting to prove that language is not a human invention, Professor

Uitti notes, Bonald "montre qu'au contraire il s'agit d'un 'don primitif et nécessaire fait au genre humain' par Dieu" (p. 25). For Bonald, all writing must be conceived as "l'art miraculeux de donner une figure, une couleur, un corps enfin à la pensée" (Recherches philosophiques, pp. 86 s., 241). Bonald held that through writing, "[l'Homme] rend visible et palpable (car les aveugles lisent par les doigts), ce qu'il y a en nous, et même dans l'univers, de plus invisible et de plus impalpable, la pensée; ...il rend fixe, permanent, transportable ce qu'il y a de plus mobile et de plus fugitif, la parole; et ... il renouvelle en quelque sorte le prodige de la création, qui est une vaste pensée rendue visible, et comme l'écriture d'une grande parole" (Recherches philosophiques, p. 242). Professor Uitti underlines the affinities which exist between this doctrine and Balzac's conception of the writer's role in the preface to Le Livre mystique (1835-6): "Le don de l'écriture justifie l'oeuvre littéraire en lui précisant sa valeur, sa place. L'idée d'authenticité si chère à DuMarsais se trouve reliée, chez Bonald ainsi que chez Balzac et même chez Proust, à un principe de transcendance essentiellement poétique, et non philosophique" (p. 33). In the preface in question, Balzac says of Séraphita, "blanche et pure expression du Mysticisme," that "elle pouvait être tout, excepté membre de l'Institut; si elle connaît l'infini, les mesures du fini doivent alors lui paraître mesquines." The primordial notion of transcendance finds its expression in the preface to Le Livre mystique:

> L'auteur proteste ici de son respect pour les grands génies dont s'honore la science humaine; il adore la ligne droite, il aime encore malheureusement un peu trop la courbe; mais s'il s'agenouille devant les gloires des mathématiques et devant les miracles de la chimie, il croit, si l'on admet l'existence des Mondes Spirituels, que les plus beaux théorèmes n'y sont d'aucune utilité, que tous les calculs du fini sont caducs dans l'infini, que l'infini devant être comme Dieu, semblable à lui-même en toutes ses parties, la question de l'égalité du rond et du carré doit s'y trouver résolue, et que cette possibilité devrait donner l'amour du ciel aux géomètres.

Balzac acknowledges his doctrinal debts to Swedenborg and Saint-Martin, adding: "L'auteur n'a pas cru qu'il fût honorable pour la littérature francaise de rester muette sur une poésie aussi grandiose que l'est celle des Mystiques."[77]

Although the most important members of the early Illuminist movement have in common a single doctrine which this abbreviated history has attempted to present, it is by no means possible to affirm that the central ideas of the movement created identical directions for the Illuminists in general. Viatte and Mercier indicate that the Illuminists cannot be grouped in terms of their politics. Furthermore, it is difficult to speak of a unity of information or of inspiration, nor is it possible to note a constant common structure of symbols and images in their works. If anything, the Illuminists share a taste for the mysterious, for adventurous speculations, and intellectual variety. Their common ground lies, Viatte has observed, in "leur ferveur vive mais imprécise, leurs révoltes contre les disciplines du raisonnement ...; leur lassitude du monde terrestre, leurs aspirations à l'"amour", leur attente d'une rédemption nouvelle." Their activities, Viatte writes, marked the end of an era in the history of ideas, and seem to have coincided, although the coincidence was more than merely fortuitous, with a literary rediscovery of nature, with a feverish interest in change, with "ces multiples dérivatifs par lesquels un monde qui s'ennuie essaie de se donner le change." Reality once again became a relative term: "Plutôt que d'obéir au réel, que de se recroqueviller en des cadres rétrécis, l'homme du dix-huitième siècle finissant s'évadera parmi les fantômes; il trompera sa nostalgie avec les prestiges des souffleurs et des nécromants; il fuira, il niera éperdument la matière" (II, 269-270). Illuminism was not without importance in the appearance and development, later, of an esthetic sense which produced the nineteenth century "mal du siècle". Poetry began searching for its expression in all the excesses of the mind, embodying in that search a fundamental disenchantment with the predictable:

> Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le cerveau,
> Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, qu'importe?
> Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau! 78

If their precursors had execrated the mysterious, the Illuminists took it up with reverence and joy, so as to escape the mundane or the miserable. Where others had seen the world in terms of natural phenomena, they tried to envision it in terms of occult laws. Implicitly at least, all became possible for the imagination: Intuition, giving rise to new forms of imaginative experience, seems to replace the plodding processes of reasoned thought; intuition gives back to the thinker his ancient role of Magus. Poetry, having fallen in disfavor, is now given free rein in the most absolute terms. Eighteenth century Illuminism, Viatte has noted, contained the most basic ingredients of the Romantic literature of the following century: Man's divine roots, his primitive destinies, Satanism, the magic powers of the "grands initiés", the transmigration of souls, "internal" Christianity, the future synthesis of Church dogma, the milennium, and final redemption: "Autant de doctrines qui sans doute existent avant Swedenborg ou Saint-Martin, mais auxquelles ils donnent un nouveau sens, une nouvelle vigueur" (II, 271). Viatte has noted that Illuminism offered successively or simultaneously the lure of mystery, the excitement of a new fashion, and the bright prospect of active participation in primeval legends. By 1789, the succession of these three major stages becomes clear. Scholars have distinguished between "l'ancien illuminisme" and its modern counterpart: an obsession with the occult for its own sake. From a reaction to rationalism and a conscientious interest in the historical role of traditional ideas, the small number of early Illuminists formulated doctrine, grew in number; the new movement became a way of life for only a handful, whose initiation had been arduous. Others took it up less seriously, however, making of Illuminism and Theosophy a parlor game in which a sort of "invitation au voyage" would be acted out in the form of a charade:

> On savourait, au sortir des écoles de scepticisme, la joie de s'agenouiller aux pieds de maîtres infaillibles. La gravité de l'amour chrétien enchantait des âmes fatiguées du libertinage. Mais bientôt les profanes, envahissant le temple, en avilirent les trésors. Le recueillement disparut; Cagliostro, Mesmer étourdirent par leur caquet les grandes dames et les petits maîtres; l'illuminisme devient un jeu de salon, un exercice de prestidigitation; jamais il ne gagne plus de recrues, mais ces recrues ne le prennent pas au sérieux: faux ou vrai, peu leur importe, si elles s'amusent; au lieu d'une charade, mesdames, nous vous donnerons aujourd'hui le plaisir de causer avec les esprits. La théosophie perdait en profondeur ce qu'elle gagnait en étendue.... 79

By 1789, the separation between the "old" and the "new" Illuminists becomes clear. The former are exiles in the face of a new order, remain silent for a decade, and by the turn of the century, they take up their pens in an atmosphere hostile to these aging "doctrinaires" of a bygone era. With the death of Fabre d'Olivet in 1825, the "cult of Nature" begins to mark the works of a new group of writers. Hugo, Vigny, a few others, are at the beginning of a new moment, and their anxious questions seek to name another Magus.[80] In their work will be measured the full force of a revived Illuminism, whose ties with the tradition of Fabre d'Olivet, of

Joseph de Maistre and of Saint-Martin, while sometimes tenuous, were to bring the great doctrine full circle on its way back to an interest in a primeval past which is still with us.

In his preface to Chacornac's biography of Eliphas Lévi, Victor-Emile Michelet writes: "Les Initiés sont très rares, ou dispersés. Leur chaîne se maintient: A Fabre d'Olivet et Joseph de Maistre a succédé Wronski."[81] Laplace is reported to have said of Hoëné Wronski (1778-1843): "Il a fallu un Polonais pour introduire la mystique dans la mathématique!"[82] Viatte has considered Wronski as one of the great unknowns of modern poetic thought (II, 253-260). Mercier has compared him to Saint-Martin and to Swedenborg, who preceded Wronski by a half century.[83] In a pioneering essay published in 1947, André Rolland de Renéville paid homage to the little-known Wronski as the symbolist theoretician whose philosophical system called for creative intuition as an authentic substitute for deductive reasoning: "Le rôle prométhéen que Wronski attribue à l'humanité lorsqu'il lui reconnaît et lui fixe la tâche de parfaire la Création, est à la base du Messianisme auquel aboutit son système. C'est en créant sa propre immortalité que l'homme verra la promesse du Messie s'accomplir."[84]

As the foremost theoretician of nineteenth century

XUM

Messianism, Wronski was among the most articulate members of a movement whose aims were the complete reorganization of all human knowledge and the discovery, through mathematical equations, of the absolute principles of life. Wronski's work on *Messianism*, published in two volumes in 1847, had the following title:

MESSIANISME
OU
REFORME ABSOLUE DU SAVOIR HUMAIN
NOMMEMENT
REFORME DES MATHEMATIQUES COMME PROTOTYPE
DE L'ACCOMPLISSEMENT FINAL DES SCIENCES
ET
REFORME DE LA PHILOSOPHIE COMME BASE
DE L'ACCOMPLISSEMENT FINAL DE LA RELIGION [85]

Wronski's *Prolégomènes du Messianisme*, published in 1842, are an important companion piece to the obscure, difficult work cited above. Indeed, where *Messianisme* requires a deep acquaintance with theoretical mathematics to make some sense of the hundreds of pages of equations, the *Prolégomènes* provide us with much insight, in somewhat simpler terms, into the strange workings of the movement, and seem to be addressed to the less erudite reader. What follows is the barest outline of Messianism's principal tenets.

Messianism is a philosophical doctrine (the last, maintained Wronski) whose basis is the Absolute ("le principe inconditionnel de toute realité"), and whose summit is lost in the "Final Destinies" of humanity ("dans le dernier but de l'existence des êtres raisonnables"). To reveal its eternal basis, the doctrine takes the name of Absolute Philosophy; to reveal its infinite summit, its ultimate goal, the doctrine takes the name of Messianism:

> Comme philosophie absolue, cette doctrine, en formant ainsi, par son principe absolu, la vraie PHILOSOPHIE SPECULATIVE, doit dévoiler les principes créateurs de toutes les réalités existantes, qui constituent l'univers.
>
> .....
>
> Comme messianisme, la même doctrine, en formant ainsi, par son but suprême, la vraie PHILOSOPHIE PRATIQUE, doit dévoiler les directions finales de toutes les réalités que l'homme, en sa qualité d'être raisonnable, doué d'une spontanéité créatrice, doit produire pour accomplir l'univers. 86

The "systematic integrity" of the doctrine demands, Wronski states, that the two purposes outlined above go on to produce a third,

> La PHILOSOPHIE TELEOLOGIQUE[87], qui a pour objet le CONCOURS SYSTEMATIQUE de ces deux éléments opposés et hétérogènes, c'est-à-dire l'HARMONIE entre l'inertie de la nature et la spontanéité de la raison, ou entre la fatalité et la liberté dans l'univers; harmonie qui se révèle à l'homme, tantôt par son sentiment, sous le ravissant aspect du BEAU, et tantôt par sa cognition, sous l'admirable contingence de l'ORDRE, offrant ainsi, l'un et l'autre, une manifestation en quelque sorte palpable de la présence divine dans la création. 88

Positing as absolute that which contains in itself the principle of its own reality, the doctrine arrived, by analogy, at a definition of the absolute as that which must constitute the first and unconditional principle of all reality. The working measure of the absolute, Wronski held, is "le VERBE", existing to indicate and lead the way to the original principle: "C'est ... qu'avant toute création, le Verbe était en Dieu, et qu'il l'est de même dans l'homme, doué de la raison absolue, et destiné, par ce don auguste, à accomplir lui-même sa propre création."[89] In its simplest lines, then, the doctrine is exceptionally synthetic and seductive. Little wonder, in light of the definition above especially, that both scientists and poets were attracted to the doctrine of Messianism in the mid-nineteenth century.

Inspired by Kant, Schelling and Hegel, Wronski sought to affirm through intellectual speculation the absolute conditions of existence and reality. Although a century separates Wronski and René Guénon, the doctrine of Messianism was as timely and audacious in the nineteenth century as Guénon's was in the early twentieth. Indeed, the two share more than timeliness and audacity. Wronski affirmed that Man is a creator himself, in a state of perpetual "becoming"; by accepting the Law of Creation outlined above, he may understand his primordial roots. Guénon's Les Etats multiples de l'Etre (1932), as I hope to show, contains this dogma and elaborates upon it. Mercier has rightly pointed out that

Wronski's doctrine leaves absolutely no room for chance. His system, Mercier states, "diffère, ainsi, d'une façon certaine, de l'activité aventureuse du mystique et de toute approche spontanée de l'extase et de la révélation" (p. 51). As will be demonstrated in my later exposé of Guénon's doctrine, this fundamental approach is shared by the two thinkers: no "mystic" vision can substitute for intellective intuition. Guénon's Aperçus sur l'Initiation (1946) is clear on this point.

As Guénon's doctrine was to find its expression in the works of the poets of his time, so Wronski was taken up by the early Symbolist poets. Baudelaire, in a letter to Ancelle in September, 1843, asked for Wronski's works,[90] and he seems to have had the doctrine of Messianism in mind when he wrote of contemporary man in 1855 that he is "tellement américanisé par ses philosophes zoocrates et industriels, qu'il a perdu la notion des différences qui caractérisent les phénomènes du monde physique et du monde moral, du naturel et du surnaturel."[91] Messianism called for Man to incarnate in himself the act of divine creation through an active creative effort of his own. Mercier and Renéville have pointed compellingly to the parallels which exist between this doctrine and what has been referred to as Baudelaire's "cult of the artificial": Nature, to make its primeval meanings clear to the uninitiate, must be recreated by the poet through the artifice of "divine" language. Then and only then, could

Man transcend the gratuitous and the contingent, entering the sanctum of Isis, and fathoming her awe-inspiring declaration: "I am the Mother and all of Nature, Mistress of all the Elements, Origin and Principle of the centuries."[92] The single overriding purpose of Messianism was expressed in Wronski's hope:"...enfin déchirer le voile d'Isis et effacer, de son temple de Saïs, la terrible inscription."[93] Messianism's fatal and wondrous attachment to Isis seems to have been in Baudelaire's thoughts when he wrote:

> C'est cet admirable, cet immortel instinct du Beau qui nous fait considérer la Terre et ses spectacles comme un aperçu, comme une correspondance du Ciel. La soif insatiable de tout ce qui est au-delà, et que révèle la vie, est la preuve la plus vivante de notre immortalité. C'est à la fois par la poésie et à travers la poésie, par et à travers la musique, que l'âme entrevoit les splendeurs situées derrière le tombeau.... 94

It was in this spirit, indeed, that Baudelaire quotes some germane lines of Victor Hugo, and makes them his own:

> Morne Isis, couverte d'un voile!
> Araignée à l'immense toile,
> Où se prennent les nations!
> Fontaine d'urnes obsédée!
> Mamelle sans cesse inondée,
> Où, pour se nourrir de l'idée
> Viennent les générations! 95

Hugo was well-acquainted with cabbalistic lore, although his use of material from the Cabbala seems to have been restricted to a properly poetic (i.e., creative) interest. In

"The Vision of Lilith in Hugo's 'La Fin de Satan'," [*French Review* (Vol. XXXI, no. 6, May, 1958), pp. 479-486], Karl D. Uitti has studied the role of Lilith-Isis in Hugo's epic, tracing the poet's acquaintance with the image as a poetic symbol and as a philosophical concept. Existing cabbalistic studies in France, among them Franck's *La Kabbale ou la philosophie religieuse des Hébreux* (1843), and especially Dom Calmet's *Commentaire littéral* (1707-16) and his remarks on *Isaiah* *xxxiv* (XIV), had explained the figure of Lilith in Judeo-Christian myths, and particularly her role in the essentially Manichean cabbalistic legend which distinguishes clearly between God-Matrona and Satan-Lilith in Man's passage from sin, through expiation, to a state of grace. "Much of what he would later utilize in the composition of *La Fin de Satan*," Professor Uitti notes, "Hugo learned from a contemporary cabbalist, Alexandre Weill, with whom he was quite friendly from 1836 to 1852." Yet this study shows, through a careful examination of the Lilith legend in genuine cabbalistic writings, that Hugo used cabbalistic doctrine primarily to "impose a sequence, i.e. an esthetic order upon the thousands of images and the poetic thoughts which filled his consciousness." *La Fin de Satan* is therefore not an exposition of a "doctrinal system" such as is clearly present in the Lilith legend in the *Cabbala*. If Hugo's epic "was written with any end in mind besides that of simply creating," Professor Uitti concludes, "it is an attempt to fix in precise images the vague efforts of humanity in its struggle for liberation from slavery and for freedom in a peaceful world purged of the scourge of evil."

The natural consequence of all attempts to formulate enduring notions of the absolute was to give the lie to the gratuitous role of chance. While it is difficult to prove a direct influence of Wronski upon Mallarmé, the affinities are there under the fatal sign of the poet's celebrated dice. Mallarmé's attempt to crush the inexorable dominion of chance seems to end in anguish and impotence when he declares: "Un coup de dès jamais n'abolira le hasard." Yet the poet's effort to deal successfully with the ever-changing "realities" which marked his life were to end in a recreation, through language, of reality. The thrown dice may not abolish chance, but the words they help order, by their very existence, will keep chance one sterile step away. Thus language, the elevated language of the poet, will be the symbol of the absolute. Mallarmé has written: "La Poésie est l'expression, par le langage humain ramené à son rythme essentiel, du sens mystérieux de l'existence: elle doue ainsi d'authenticité notre séjour et constitue la seule tâche spirituelle."[96] This language, expressive of secret causes, will mark the cycles which create the living helix of Mallarmé's universe: life to death and back through resurrection; light to darkness and back to transcendent light. "Le hasard n'entame pas un vers," Mallarmé wrote to Coppée: "C'est la grande chose." Indeed, chance touched all things but poetry, Mallarmé believed. On that basis, and in the name of a universe locked into Man's gratuitous laws, the poet would think to create a work which would synthesize the achievements of all the arts and merge all books into a single one. Mallarmé named it, "Le Grand OEuvre, comme disaient les alchimistes, nos ancêtres." In that statement, and in the unfinished (indeed, barely-begun) Great Work he envisioned, Mallarmé placed himself in the direct family-line which joined the Alchemists--those great patriarchs of living myth--to René Guénon and the Primordial Tradition. While even Mallarmé found it impossible to "leave behind 'real' life unannealed by death," he seems to have had a successor--perhaps René Guénon--in mind when he wrote: "Mon admiration tout entière va au grand Mage inconsolable et obstiné chercheur d'un mystère qu'il ne sait pas exister et qu'il poursuivra, à jamais pour cela, du deuil de son lucide désespoir, car c'eût été la vérité...." 97

With Wronski and the poets of his time, Mallarmé was eager to reveal Isis and fathom her primeval dogma. At the turn of the last century, an important esoterist review came to life. Named Le Voile d'Isis by Papus, and edited by René Guénon for twenty years until his death in 1951, the review carried a revealing epigraph: "Le Hasard n'existe pas...." In that simple inscription is summarized at once the symbolist ideal and the tragedy embodied by the Magus described above by Mallarmé. The Word, highest of human expressions, will stay the poet's despair, will underscore his lucidity, and will conspire to reveal the Goddess in her most secret aspects. Thus affirming the absolute in the face of all "scientific" evidence to the contrary, it will answer the most important questions, provided Man can formulate them. In the 1830's, Wronski built his "prognoscope", which is supposed to have been able to answer all questions of a metaphysical order. Mercier has called it, "cet ancêtre des ordinateurs modernes ... en somme un microcosme de notre univers mental" (p. 53). Eliphas Lévi is said to have used the "prognoscope" in his preparation of the Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie, and Saint-Yves d'Alveydre modeled his celebrated "Archéomètre" after it.[98] Jacques Scherer has indicated that Mallarmé had a similar system in mind when he formulated the idea for his Great Work.[99]

In his introduction to Lévi's Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie, Arthur Edward Waite wrote:

> No modern expositor of occult claims can bear any comparison with Eliphas Levi, and among ancient expositors, though many stand higher in authority and are assuredly more sincere, all yield to him in living interest, for he is actually the spirit of modern thought forcing an answer for the times from the old oracles. Hence there are greater names, but there has been no influence so great during the last two centuries: no fascination in occult literature exceeds that of the French Magus. 100

Waite's observation is not unnecessarily flattering; his carefully researched and annotated translations of Lévi's works point up the many shortcomings of the Magus' scholarship and intellectual consistency;[101] indeed, Waite has stated flatly that Lévi's constructions of doctrine "are of the last kind that would be commended to the custodians of doctrine."[102] Yet Waite points up the two most important characteristics of Lévi's works: they are compellingly readable, and their influence on a host of minor writers, and an important number of great ones, has been considerable. In his biography of Lévi, Paul Chacornac has shown that the Magus' closest friends were among the most influential literary figures of the time.[103] In his preface to Le Livre des Splendeurs (1894), Papus wrote: "Parmi les littérateurs élevés presque directs d'Eliphas nous citerons Stanislas de Guaïta, Victor-Emile Michelet, Albert Jounet, Joséphin Péladan, René Caillé."[104] Indeed, Lévi's influence on and affinities with the non-literary occultists of the time is stated by Papus to have been "réelle, mais secondaire"; this affirms--by default, in a sense--that the work of the occultist-Magus, like that of the writers, is one which is rooted in the imagination, in a creative process which translates a desired return to certain essential archetypes.

The act of poetic creation, affirmed Lévi, accepted implicitly the science of numbers as the repository of harmony; failure to accept and submit to the rigors of this sacred science was tantamount to a betrayal of the poetic act. In a passage of his Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie, quite reminiscent of Baudelaire's statements on the "mathematical exactitude" of poetic language, Lévi wrote:

> Etre poète, c'est créer; ce n'est pas rêver ni mentir. Dieu a été poète lorsqu'il a fait le monde, et son immortelle épopée est écrite avec des étoiles ... La poésie qui n'accepte pas le monde tel que Dieu l'a fait, et qui cherche à en inventer un autre, n'est que le délire des esprits des ténèbres. 105

Proudhon and other socialists of his time had maintained that Nero had been the incarnation of poetry reigning over the world; in his act of having Rome burned while he played music, Proudhon, Lévi observes, saw a dramatization of Vergil's greatest verses. "Jamais nature plus désordonnée n'effraya le monde de ses écarts," wrote Lévi: "Et voilà ce que les révolutionnaires de l'école de M. Proudhon entendent par de la poésie!"[106]

Announcing a major theme of René Guénon, Eliphas Lévi held in his Dogme et Rituel that "la synthèse de tous les dogmes nous ramène à un seul symbolisme, qui est celui de la cabbale et des mages" (I, 53). He maintained, without really documenting his "facts", that linguistic misunderstandings alone separated the Cabbala from the Occidental mind; the cabbalists, in their turn, had not paid sufficient attention to the cross, which, "dans les symboles primitifs de l'Egypte magique, était déjà la clef du ciel...." (I, 54). Enlarging on this theme in a suggestive passage of his Dogme et Rituel (I, 63), Lévi points up the primordial synthesis which was to become the object of Guénon's life-work:

> A travers le voile de toutes les allégories hiératiques et mystiques des anciens dogmes, à travers les ténèbres et les épreuves bizarres de toutes les initiations, sous le sceau de toutes les écritures sacrées, dans les ruines de Ninive ou de Thèbes, sur les pierres rongées des anciens temples et sur la face noircie des sphinx de l'Assyrie ou de l'Egypte, dans les peintures monstrueuses ou merveilleuses qui traduisent pour les croyants de l'Inde les pages sacrées des Védas, dans les emblèmes étranges de nos vieux livres d'alchimie, dans les cérémonies de réception pratiquées par toutes les sociétés mystérieuses, on retrouve les traces d'une doctrine partout la même et partout soigneusement cachée.

There is no practical evidence of these assertions in the works of Eliphas Lévi; unlike Guénon, he seems to have taken for granted a certain hieratic, intuitive "knowledge" in his readers. Although many of Lévi's unsupported conclusions have exasperated Waite as well as many a modern reader, the processes of his assertions are marked by a taste for the elliptical and the prophetic dictum rather than mere ignorance. Chacornac, Viatte, Mercier, Waite, among others, have shown Lévi's most important declarations to be substantially true. In my chapter on the traditional symbol in the works of René Guénon, I hope to present further evidence that Lévi was an authentic, if unscholarly servant of the Alchemists' Great Work. Echoing, perhaps unwittingly, the oracle of Hermes

Trismegistos, Lévi sums up the unifying principle of transcendental magic in his History of Magic (I, 119):

> Il n'y a qu'un dogme en magie, et le voici: le visible est la manifestation de l'invisible, ou, en d'autres termes, le verbe parfait est, dans les choses appréciables et visibles, en proportion exacte avec les choses inappréciables à nos sens et invisibles à nos yeux.

Of the Cabbala, Lévi later affirmed that "cette tradition repose tout entière sur le dogme unique de la magie: le visible est pour nous la mesure proportionnelle de l'invisible" (I, 221). Maintaining that all human (temporal) relationships with the divine are established according to the Law of Harmony, Lévi held that true wisdom lay in knowing how to achieve the union of complementaries. Seeing in Man the father of Cain and in Woman the mother of Abel, he pointed to the fundamentally binary nature of all components of the hermetic philosophia perennis or Primordial Tradition: the multiplicity of manifested forms point to Unity. "L'unité," Lévi wrote, "ne peut se manifester que par le binaire;" also, "l'unité du macrocosme se révèle par les deux points opposés des deux triangles" (I, 126-127). Solomon's Seal, the hexagram formed by these two triangles, is the major arcanum of the Zohar. The perfectly intertwined triangles, one dark and the other light, were the symbol of one of Lévi's most luminous tenets, evocative of Mallarmé's reasoning in his celebrated definition of "fleur" as "l'absente de tout bouquet", and harking back to the medieval Alchemists: "Pour rendre la lumière visible, Dieu a seulement supposé l'ombre" (I, 128). Thus when Lévi sums up his version of the "Sacred Science" in terms of a handful of principles, he points the way to the major pieces of the Symbolist armature:

> L'analogie est le dernier mot de la science et le premier mot de la foi.
>
> L'harmonie est dans l'équilibre, et l'équilibre subsiste par l'analogie des contraires.
>
> L'unité absolue, c'est la raison suprême et dernière des choses...
>
> Pour créer l'équilibre, il faut séparer et unir: séparer par les pôles, unir par le centre.
>
> La raison et la foi s'excluent mutuellement par leur nature et s'unissent par l'analogie.
>
> L'analogie est le seul médiateur possible entre le visible et l'invisible, entre le fini et l'infini. 107

The Saint-Simonians, and especially their spiritual leader, the pontifical Père Enfantin, seem to have fallen short of Lévi's ideals despite many doctrinal similarities. In one of his numerous letters to the Baron de Spedalieri, Lévi wrote:

> L'école Saint-Simonienne, malgré ses qualités estimables, m'a toujours inspiré une vive répulsion. Ils ont de la vraie religion tout excepté l'esprit de piété; leur femme libre me fait horreur et ils ne peuvent comprendre la charité puisqu'ils méconnaissent l'amour. Ils sont froids comme l'industrialisme, tranchants, despotes et calculateurs. Je me fâche quand je les vois toucher de si près à nos grandes vérités que leur sécheresse de coeur compromet et profane. Enfantin a certainement des aperçus remarquables mais il est plein d'égoisme et de fatuité. 108

Lévi does not exaggerate. The minutes of the numerous séances of Enfantin and his group are ample testimony to the unnecessary pomp and circumstance which surrounded the secret meetings of the society in Ménilmontant in the early 1830's. The minutes of these meetings, prepared by Barrault, a member, and heretofore unpublished, were recently transcribed by Paul Mickey, who has prepared a senior thesis on this movement for the Department of History at Princeton University. Under the general title of Le Livre Nouveau, these precious notes are among the most eloquent doctrinal writings of the Saint-Simonians, and constitute a reexamination of the most basic foundations of French society of the period: the Church, the civil rights of women, and the nature and development of language. Envisioning solutions to society's ills which are similar in intent to Lévi's attempts at social reform, the Saint-Simonians betray the characteristics which Lévi criticizes above; Enfantin's "egotism" and "fatuity" are quite transparent:

> ...aujourd'hui le peuple n'a plus faim seulement de pain et de parole; l'art s'élèvera par nous à la hauteur de la Religion, afin que, de là, il descende vivifier le peuple affamé de poésie.

and again:

> Il n'est donné qu'à nous, dont la Foi est véritablement catholique, de résoudre ce problème dont les traditions de la tour de Babel et du don des langues attestent que l'intelligence humaine a toujours été préoccupée. 109

At the same time, we see emerging a lesser-known but pioneering poet-occultist, Alphonse Esquiros. A friend of Baudelaire and Théophile Gautier, Esquiros affirmed, more than two decades before the appearance of Les Fleurs du Mal, that "dans la nature, tout est signe d'une beauté invisible."[110] With his Chants d'un Prisonnier (1841), Esquiros was one of the first Romantic poets to relate esoteric doctrine and poetic creation:

> Dieu seul sait mes tourments et mes inquiétudes,
> Le but mystérieux de mes jeunes études.
> Tout jeune, j'ai cherché sur les pas de Mesmer
> A sonder le sommeil, cette profonde mer.
>
> .....
>
> J'ai, voyant l'ombre autour des rites et des cultes,
> Demandé la lumière aux sciences occultes,
> Et forcé dans la nuit à me parler un peu
> Ce secret qui promit de faire l'homme Dieu. 111

Arthur Edward Waite wrote in 1913 that Eliphas Lévi's literary friendships in 1839 included Alphonse Esquiros, "the now almost forgotten author of a fantastic romance, titled The Magician...."[112] The title of that work alone evokes the very real affinities which existed between Esquiros and Lévi. With Flora Tristan and Claude Vignon (the pseudonym of Lévi's first wife, Noémie Cadiot), they played an important role in a movement which sought, among other basic freedoms, the liberation of women and the acceptance of free love.

Esquiros has been called the locus "où toutes les chimères de l'époque se rencontrent."[113] A friend of Hugo, Lamennais, Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, and Nerval, he was also a member of the Mapah cult under the guidance of Lévi. Preaching a dogma nourished by the Cabbala, Lévi saw the fusion of sexual principles in God.[114] The sign of this fusion was Mapah, formed by the first syllables, respectively, of mater and pater. Lévi cut a curious figure in the 1840's, fancying himself as the last incarnation of the Primordial Androgyne in what have become some of the strangest self-advertisements in the history of occultism. In La France Mystique, Alexandre Erdan evokes this image of Lévi (whose real name was Constant) in 1848: "Je me rappelle que, dans certains journaux de la grande année révolutionnaire, on lisait ceci: telle réunion, telle rue, Président: le citoyen Abbé Constant; secrétaire: la citoyenne Abbé Constant."[115]

Esquiros was captivated by the certainties which the enigmatic Mapah postulated. He thought of doubt as a corollary to weakness, speaking of it as "cette écume qui s'attache à toutes les ondes mortes et stériles."[116] Yet as the avowed apostle of "la Certitude", imbued with the anti-Cuvier theories of Saint-Hilaire, who saw a fundamental unity in nature, Esquiros was disappointed in the positivist "realities" of his time. With his friend Théophile Gautier, he turned elsewhere,

Car la foi seule peut nous faire voir le ciel

Dans l'exil de la vie, et ce désert du monde
Où la félicité sur le néant se fonde
Et le malheur sur le réel. 117

Looking to the Orient for some form of metaphysical solace, Esquiros' poetry is marked by a theme of evasion which is discerned without difficulty as the single constant among the poets of the period, from the weakest versifiers to the sons of Orpheus. In La Solitude, Esquiros wrote:

Moi, je suis fils des eaux, de l'orage et des temps;
Je voudrais, habitant d'une cité flottante,
Vivre au milieu d'un fleuve et déployer ma tente
Sur les joncs et les flots mouvants.
Vains rêves! Pour voler mon coursier n'a pas d'aile,
Personne ne voudra me prendre à la nacelle;
L'argent, froid positif, m'enchaîne sur ces bords,
On ne peut pas franchir l'Océan à la nage
Et les flots, sans salaire, au milieu de l'orage
Ne voiturent que les corps morts. 118

Inspired by Goethe's Faust, which he discovered through his friend Nerval, Esquiros was familiar with the writings of Nicolas Flamel, one of the great alchemists of the fifteenth century. Both Esquiros and Nerval were interested in the ideas of Antoine Mesmer, who had visited Paris in 1778 and aroused the curiosity of the Faculté de Medecine with his Influence des planètes sur le corps humain. A confirmed believer in the powers of magnetism, Esquiros conducted experiments in psychism with Hugo present as early as 1834--some years before Hugo's well-known "tables tournantes."[119] In his biography, Jacques van der Linden writes: "Au milieu de 1836 Esquiros est considéré comme expert ès sciences occultes et jugé digne de briller comme tel parmi les collaborateurs compétents d'Emile de Girardin à la Presse, journal le plus moderne à l'époque" (p. 145). Eliphas Lévi's fondest supporter at this time, along with the charitable Madame Legrand, was the enigmatic Flora Tristan, whose death in 1844 left Lévi the responsibility of seeing through the posthumous publication of her revolutionary magnum opus, L'Emancipation de la Femme ou Le Testament de la Paria. Of this work Chacornac has observed: "Ce testament littéraire et religieux de La Paria est bien de Flora Tristan quant aux idées mais de A. Constant pour la forme" (p. 81). In his Les Compagnons de la Hiérophanie, Victor-Emile Michelet has noted the close friendship which existed between Lévi and Bulwer Lytton, a leader of British Masonic thought, and the author of Eugene Aram and Zanoni. "L'influence d'Eliphas Lévi s'exerca même en son vivant..." Michelet wrote. "Ce qui est certain, c'est qu'elle toucha fortement les esprits du mouvement de 1890, qui tous, furent mes amis."[120] With Paul Adam, Stanislas de Guaïta, Barlet, Albert Poisson, Albert Jounet and Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, these friends at other times included Joséphin Péladan, Alphonse Esquiros, Mallarmé, Théophile Gautier, and his daughter, Judith. Of Judith Gautier's husband, Michelet wrote: "Je me souviens que Catulle Mendès me récitait avec admiration des phrases du Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie qu'il avait gardées dans sa mémoire pour leur beauté plastique."[121]

Judith Gautier was, with Nina de Villard, one of the few women of their time to have delved deeply into initiatic studies. Judith Gautier's biographer, Mathilde Camacho, reports: "Elle était déjà initiée, pour ainsi dire, à la magie, en assistant aux réunions spirites de Mlle. Huet, son ancienne institutrice. Mais son étude, sous la direction d'Eliphas Lévi, fut beaucoup plus sérieuse et comportait des leçons de magie et la lecture de livres et d'anciens textes cabalistiques."[122] Mercier notes the following entry in the Goncourt's diary for December 28, 1873: "Judith Gautier s'excuse de son retard aux obsèques de François Hugo en annonçant qu'elle vient de prendre sa leçon de magie" (p. 81). Captivated by Baudelaire's translations of Poe (Eurélia in particular), as well as the music of Richard Wagner, whose friend she was, Judith Gautier has left some quite interesting poems, and a record of the esoteric preoccupations of the literati of her time. In Les Rites Divins, dedicated to the memory of Leconte de Lisle, Judith's poetry shows a marked affinity for Oriental esoterism. One piece, L'Amrita des Dieux, is reminiscent of passages in Lévi's Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie, and especially of Leconte de Lisle's "Poèmes hindous" (Poèmes antiques). Amrita, in Hindu mythology, is the symbolic equivalent of the "draught of immortality" known in Occidental mythology as the fons juventutis; Cirlot has it that amrita is, with the Fountain of Youth, "a symbol of the life-force of Man and of all things."[123] Thus

Dans la nuit merveilleuse au coeur du ciel posée

La lune resplendit, pleine de l'amrita....

The gods are out that night, thirsting for the divine drink. In their greedy haste, however, they spill some drops of the golden liquid, which fall to the earth and touch the lips of hopeless Man:

> Enfin la coupe, au ciel, n'est plus qu'un croissant vide,
> Les bienheureux ont fui, laissant l'espace en deuil.
>
> Mais l'homme obscur a bu des gouttes du mystère,
> L'infini, tout entier, a pénétré ses yeux.
> Il est poète, il chante, et pour charmer la terre,
> Il dévoile le ciel et révèle les dieux. 124

Veils and their symbols weave in and out of Judith Gautier's poems, presaging moments of rare insight and attending to the poet's fears in the face of the unknown--both desired and held in awe, terrifying and calming in the presence of the finite poet's vision. In Le Vitrail, she writes:

> Je l'aime, ce vitrail me voilant l'univers,
> Car pour mes yeux longtemps il filtra la lumière.
> Les jours de ma jeunesse, en passant à travers,
> L'ont doré d'un rayon de l'aurore première. 125

A return to, or rebirth in, that primeval dawn is an important theme in Judith's writings. A frequent visitor at the Chinese Embassy in Paris, and a close friend of numerous Chinese diplomatic envoys to France in the late eighteen-hundreds, Judith exchanged poems with her Oriental friends. There are no indications that Judith had much knowledge of the Chinese language, and Yu-Keng, a Minister of China, reportedly sent her poems which he wrote in French.[126] After his death in 1910, "pour le remercier d'un poème," Judith wrote:

> Comme une graine, au vent jetée,
> Par une rafale emportée
> J'ai fleuri, loin du sol natal,
> Sous le brouillard occidental.
>
> Mais, dans mon ennui nostalgique,
> Toujours vers l'Orient magique
> Mon rêve, au tournesol pareil,
> Se tourne vers le vrai soleil.
>
> Loin de la glorieuse aïeule,
> Je me sens orpheline et seule,
> Et dans mon coeur jamais lassé
> Veille le culte du passé.
>
> O Yu-Keng! illustre poète,
> Par vous la Chine me fait fête
> Et, comblant mon plus cher souhait,
> Pour son enfant me reconnaît. [127]

Judith Gautier was the anonymous author, in 1903, of a strange tract titled *Le Livre de la Foi nouvelle*. Mme. Camacho, her biographer, indicates that the work, published without indication of author, city, date, editor or publisher, contains references to Hindu and Chinese metaphysics, and announces, in essentially allegorical terms, the coming of a new freedom for humanity. I have been unable to trace this seemingly over-mysterious publication, and must depend on Judith's biographer for information, although her sources are not indicated:

> L'idée qui s'en dégage est qu'à l'apparition d'un univers les deux pôles de la nature, l'esprit et la matière, existent. L'esprit, en descendant dans la matière, se sacrifie,

> mais de ce sacrifice naît la conscience
> de l'homme. Et l'homme peut par sa conscience
> et sa volonté obtenir la délivrance; "tous
> ses efforts doivent tendre à réaliser son
> diamant--que tu peux appeler âme." Ainsi
> l'homme retourne à l'esprit d'où il est issu. 128

The résumé is interesting for its evocation of Fabre d'Olivet's consideration of spirit and matter as an artificial dualism whose resolution points to the integration of Man and his higher principle--here "l'âme"--which is Unity. Judith Gautier borrowed freely and frequently from Oriental doctrine in her Le Vieux de la Montagne (1893), which is marked by Islamic esoterism. In Le Dragon Impérial (1867), she has the Emperor repeat the words of Lao-Tseu: "La perfection consiste à être sans passions pour mieux contempler l'harmonie de l'univers."[129]

Certainly the most important of Judith's many occupations was her salon, which was, Camacho reports, "pas un salon mondain, mais un lieu de douce intimité où se rencontraient ceux qui l'aimaient vraiment, ceux qui l'admiraient, l'élite intellectuelle de son temps" (p. 171). Her most frequent visitors were members of the Chinese legation in Paris. Among the other habitués were Henri de Régnier, Hérédia, Pierre Louÿs, Péladan, and Albert de Pouvourville who later was to help found La Gnose with René Guénon and was one of his closest friends in the budding Traditionalist movement. Judith had in Pouvourville one of the most genuine and articulate spokesmen and initiates of Taoist thought in France at the time. Henri de Régnier leaves a lasting impression of this extraordinary hostess:

> Chez elle, on ne se croirait guère au centre de Paris. Il y a de l'Orientale et même de l'Extrême-Oriental dans l'auteur du *Dragon Impérial* ... Est-ce d'Egypte ou de Perse qu'est venu s'incarner jadis en sa jeune et impétueuse beauté son âme nostalgique, lointaine et vagabonde?... 130

In November, 1873, Judith Gautier paid a visit to Eliphas Lévi. His account of this meeting, two years before his death, is worth reporting for the "literary" atmosphere he brought to his *séances*:

> Voici qu'un de ces jours derniers m'arrive une dame en deuil, belle comme la Vénus de Milo, plus belle même, car elle n'avait jamais subi ce grand étonnement inconnu qui a fait jadis tomber les bras de la déesse de marbre.
>
> C'était Mme Judith Mendès, née Théophile Gautier, poète et faiseuse de romans fantaisistes, comme son père. Elle m'aborde en me saluant du nom de maître, me dit qu'elle lit mes livres avec enthousiasme, et vient me demander des leçons.
>
> Elle veut de plus m'enlever séance tenante; je me laisse faire et je me trouve chez M. Catulle Mendès, au milieu du cercle de jeunes littérateurs (si jeunes en effet que plusieurs ne sont pas encore nés), qui impriment leurs oeuvres chez Lemerre (Sully-Prudhomme n'y était pas, on le range déjà parmi les vieux)... Cette jeunesse m'accueille avec déférence et même avec respect. M. Catulle Mendès me dit que mes ouvrages contiennent une science étonnante et des beautés littéraires de premier ordre. Bref, on me fête, on m'invite à revenir! ... jeudi prochain on doit venir me prendre et m'emmener chez Victor Hugo qui, en ce moment, est à Paris. 131

Judith Gautier, Catulle Mendès, Victor Hugo, all were enthusiastic admirers of Alphonse Louis Constant, who looked to his cherished *Cabbala* to find the name by which he is best known: Eliphas Lévi Zahed.[132] It has been said that Lévi was the first Frenchman to have used the word "occultism" in his works.[133] Robert Amadou, who has written the preface to the latest edition of René Guénon's *Symbolisme de la Croix*, bases his definition of occultism on the works of Lévi, although the language he uses is practically a summary of Guénon's *Aperçus sur l'Initiation*: "L'occultisme est l'ensemble des doctrines et des pratiques fondées sur la théorie des correspondances."[134] Papus (Gérard Encausse), in his *Traité élémentaire de science occulte* (1888), has written of the occult as a sacred science, having its own principles, its own immutable laws, and standing alone as a guide to the transcendent realities which underlie natural phenomena.[135]

We know that Guénon was familiar with the works of Eliphas Lévi and Papus. Guénon cites Lévi frequently in *L'Erreur Spirite* (1923), and *Initiation et réalisation spirituelle* (1952). Guénon's interest in the school of Papus, which was shared by his young associates, Pouvourville and Champrenaud, although it ended in a rift, was to reappear throughout his life. Four decades after his short-lived review, *La Gnose* (1909-1910), Guénon was to give the following definition of the "sacred science" which we find in Lévi's *Dogme et Rituel*:

> Le véritable fondement du symbolisme, c'est ...

> la correspondance qui existe entre tous
> les ordres de la réalité, qui les relie l'un
> à l'autre, et qui s'étend, par conséquent,
> de l'ordre naturel pris dans son ensemble à
> l'ordre surnaturel lui-même. 136

Embracing the "sacred science", then, was a means to direct perception, via symbols, of a tradition which Guénon names Primordial. Amadou states that tradition, taken in this sense, comes to mean a certain permanent, intellective intuition: "une certaine manière de voir et de sentir le monde qui, lorsqu'elle s'explicitera en mots, engendrera les exposés dogmatiques d'un Hermès ou d'un Boehme, les manuels d'un Eliphas Lévi et les poèmes d'un Rimbaud."[137]

Among the most objective students of Lévi and the occult were Jacques Matter, Adolphe Franck, and Alfred Maury. Franck especially (1809-1893) may well have been among the first students, in his La Kabbale (1843), to have begun serious esoteric studies in France in the nineteenth century. Maury (1817-1892) was more widely read, having published numerous works on esoteric folklore and occultism. The titles of some of Maury's works indicate his interests, as well as the affinities which exist between him and the budding Symbolist movement: Les fées (1843); Nouvelles observations sur les analogies des phénomènes du rêve et l'aliénation mentale (1853); De certains faits observés dans les rêves et dans l'état intermédiaire entre la veille et le sommeil (1857), and Le sommeil et les rêves (1861). His La Magie et l'Astrologie (1860) appears at the same time as Eliphas Lévi's Histoire de la Magie and Louis Figuier's Histoire du Merveilleux. It is a matter of record that Jules Michelet's La Sorcière (1862) was inspired in large measure by Maury's research; Michelet's novel itself may have exercised a certain influence upon some of Rimbaud's poetry.[138] Indeed, Rimbaud turns quite often, and unpredictably, to occult allusions which are in substance reminiscent of Lévi's notions on the role of the poet:

O saisons, ô châteaux,
J'ai fait la magique étude
Du bonheur, que nul n'élude. 139

Enid Starkie has made an excellent case for the initiatic language in Rimbaud's poems, relating his vocabulary to that of the Hermetic philosophers. One poem, "L'Enfance," seems to have been conceived under the Alchemists' sign of Azoth which, containing the first and last letters of the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin alphabets, was the signal of Hermetic Truth, the perfect symbol of the absolute.[140] Yet Rimbaud's vocabulary is outwardly simple, for the "lessive d'or" in the following verse may be taken to represent the Alchemists' incantation, calling for the Azoth to join with fire-gold to begin the Great Work: "Je vois longtemps la mélancolique lessive d'or du couchant." Certainly the sad, downward note here implies a kind of impotence--not unlike Mallarmé's, later--in the face of the Great Work. Perhaps there is even a fundamental skepticism in the poet, who is already half-convinced that a search for the absolute is not possible for doubting Man. One of Rimbaud's most "positive" poems is written under the fundamentally antithetical symbols, as its title implies, of "Soleil et Chair" (May, 1870); yet the antithesis is not apparent at the start, but takes form much as an avalanche would, and carries us from the primal harmony of which the poet sadly sings:

> Je regrette les temps de l'antique jeunesse

to a bitter present:

> Misère! Maintenant il dit: Je sais les choses,
> Et va, les yeux fermés et les oreilles closes.
>
> .....
>
> .... Oh! la route est amère
> Depuis que l'autre Dieu nous attelle à sa croix.

Throughout this angry poem, the poet, chained to the present of his flesh denied, sings of the sunny past, of Venus and Cybele, of Ariadne and Cypris, of Leda and her Swan, listening to the primeval call of "la Nature vivante":

> Je regrette les temps où la sève du monde,
> L'eau du fleuve, le sang rose des arbres verts
> Dans les veines de Pan mettaient un univers!

Slowly, slowly the past and present merge in a rare moment of great hope: the ancient Sun will shine anew upon the present's sallow Flesh, giving it perhaps a new life, a Flesh redeemed by Venus:

> Si les temps revenaient, les temps qui sont venus!
> --Car l'Homme a fini! L'Homme a joué tous les rôles!
> Au grand jour, fatigué de briser des idoles
> Il ressuscitera, libre de tous ses Dieux,
> Et comme il est du ciel, il scrutera les cieux!
> L'Idéal, la pensée invincible, éternelle,
> Tout; le dieu qui vit, sous son argile charnelle,
> Montera, montera, brûlera sous son front!
> Et quand tu le verras sonder tout l'horizon,
> Contempteur des vieux jougs, libre de toute crainte,
> Tu viendras lui donner la Rédemption sainte!
> ......
> --Le Monde a soif d'amour: tu viendras l'apaiser.

Yet the note of great hope is a poetic conceit, as ephemeral, Rimbaud seems to suggest, as the poet's joys and the tentative rejoicings of the Flesh. Suddenly, out of the darkness of a bracketed "aside", a new, more ominous movement begins, once again restoring the terrifying dichotomy which is the sign of the poem. All statements, above, all affirmations, all hopes are dashed by a sudden series of sterile questions:

> Pourquoi l'azur muet et l'espace insondable?
> Pourquoi les astres d'or fourmillant comme un sable?
> Si l'on montait toujours, que verrait-on là-haut?
> Un Pasteur mène-t-il cet immense troupeau
> De mondes cheminant dans l'horreur de l'espace?
> Et tous ces mondes-là, que l'éther vaste embrasse,
> Vibrent-ils aux accents d'une éternelle voix?
> --Et l'Homme, peut-il voir? peut-il dire: Je crois?
> La voix de la pensée est-elle plus qu'un rêve?

Rimbaud's answer, if there can really ever be one, is cloaked in a dim, barely-remembered primeval vibration, an antique Sun fixed helplessly in Orphic mysteries, and which can no longer attenuate the horror of the present:

> Nous ne pouvons savoir!--Nous sommes accablés
> D'un manteau d'ignorance et d'étroites chimères!
> Singes d'hommes tombés de la vulve des mères,
> Notre pâle raison nous cache l'infini!
> Nous voulons regarder: --le Doute nous punit!
> Le doute, morne oiseau, nous frappe de son aile...
> --Et l'horizon s'enfuit d'une fuite éternelle! 141

Even the once-hoped-for redemption of Love disappears from this cry of despair, suppressed by Rimbaud in the last draft of "Soleil et Chair."[142] All that remains when his voice surfaces from the void is a repetition of the primeval refrain which marked the opening lines, now a descant which, point and counterpoint, brings back the sterile joys of mere memory, fixed forever in an ancient past. The poet's dream has come full circle, and, once again,

> Les Dieux écoutent l'Homme et le Monde infini!

With Lautréamont in the early 1870's, we hear Rimbaud's last angry gasp, with its terrifying visions of the apocalypse. Preceding his voyage in the spaces of Africa, Rimbaud plunges back in time, bidding farewell to the pedestrian "literacy" of the day, and enunciating a doctrine which, as Miss Starkie has observed, does not differ substantially from that of the visionaries which I have attempted to present in these pages: "From the Cabala, the books of magic and the works of occult writers," Miss Starkie has written, "Rimbaud obtained the material for his doctrine...." And again: "To clear the ground for his own conception, Rimbaud reviews the poetry of the world since the beginning of all time, and, like the occult thinkers, comes to the conclusion that it was amongst the Greeks alone that true poetry was to be found" (p. 119). Rimbaud has turned his back on his people and his time; "Tout est français," he wrote to Demeny in 1871, "c'est-à-dire haïssable au suprême degré," and by way of explanation: "Tout garçon épicier est en mesure de débobiner une apostrophe Rollaque...." Calling for a new language--one which would name the unnamable--Rimbaud seems to have foreseen Guénon's Primordial Doctrine; again to Demeny, he wrote:

> Trouver une langue;--Du reste,toute parole étant idée, le temps d'un langage universel viendra! Il faut être académicien--plus mort qu'un fossile--pour parfaire un dictionnaire, de quelque langue que ce soit.
>
> .....
>
> Cette langue sera de l'âme pour l'âme, résumant tout, parfums, sons, couleurs, de la pensée accrochant la pensée et tirant. Le poète définirait la quantité d'inconnu s'éveillant en son temps dans l'âme universelle...
>
> .....
>
> Les inventions d'inconnu réclament des formes nouvelles.[143]

Enid Starkie has suggested that Rimbaud would have known, and was perhaps inspired by, the numerous passages in Plato which deal with poetry. In the formulation of his poetic principles, Rimbaud may have used the passage from Ion in which Socrates, discussing the nature of the poet, reveals the most important characteristics of the Voyant:

> All great poets, said Socrates, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed. And as Corybantian revellers when they dance are not in their right mind, so lyric poets are not in their right mind when they are composing their beautiful strains; but when falling under the power of music and metre they are inspired and possessed; like Bacchic maidens who draw milk and honey from the rivers when they are under the influence of Dionysius but not when they are in their right mind. And the soul of the lyric poet is the same, as they themselves say; for they tell us that they bring songs from honeyed fountains, culling them out of the gardens and dells of the Muses; they, like the bees, winging their way from flower to flower. And this is true. For the poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him; when he has not attained to this state, he is powerless and is unable to utter his oracles. 144

There are important undertones, here, of the function of the writer in the discovery of the sacred language as noted in 1738 by Saint-Georges de Marsais. Considerations of the practice of the sacred science, the Illuminists held, must necessarily take note of the absence of conscious ratiocination, and of the essentially irrelevant role of an esthetic purpose. All such elevated language, Breton was to concur two centuries later, was the product of a psychic "dictation" of the real functioning of thought, "en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale."[145] This seems to have been what Rimbaud had in mind in calling for a "new language", and in stating the poet's function to be that of a visionary. While his properly "doctrinal" writings are few, and his letters to Demeny and to Izambard hurried and somewhat disorganized, Rimbaud, in seeing, between the centuries which separate Greek and Romantic poetry (with the possible exception of Racine) nothing but legions of versifiers and mere men of letters, found in occult theory both the justification and the sine qua non of the poet as a Voyant. "In occult theory," Miss Starkie has written, "primordial thinking is an autonomous activity whose object the thinker is. The outworn conception of the personal writer producing his own work is totally false. The writer is merely the vehicle for the voice of the Eternal..." (p. 122). Thus: "C'est faux de dire: Je pense. On devrait dire: On me pense."[146] And: "Le Poète se fait voyant par un long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens."[147] No excess of the mind or of the body was illegitimate if it could capture for the poet a moment's glimpse of the primordial light, a flashing, sometimes blinding view of the Cause of all causes. In rediscovering that quality of his "new" language which made of it a vehicle of Illumination, of superhuman "sight" and sense, Rimbaud planted in the poet's magic circle the roots of the Alchemists' Great Work, which had been nurtured lovingly, though perhaps with less talent, by the Illuminists. His, indeed, was "l'Alchimie du Verbe", identifying the poet with those immutable principles which reflected the law of Universal Analogy.

It is quite possible that Rimbaud was familiar with the writings of Ballanche (1776-1847), and his Essai de Palingénésie Sociale, in which the essential armature of language, beyond the functions of concrete expression or direct, objective communication, is conceived in terms of "a sort of superhuman intuition".[148] Ballanche, who saw in the Orient and its doctrines "notre berceau cosmogonique et intellectuel",[149] and considered Orpheus to be "le voyant primitif",[150] saw in the expression of primitive peoples the origins of a higher language, in which words, unencumbered by structures of nouns, adjectives, verbs, and so on, were able to express complete images of, and an intuitive "feeling" for, the object named.[151] "The earliest hymns," Miss Starkie writes, "were composed solely of nouns and adjectives, there were no verbs, for these were not necessary. This was, in a certain measure, the aim that Rimbaud was to seek to achieve in his poetry, to simplify language, omitting what was not strictly essential, and to give back to individual words the full meaning they had once possessed" (p. 125). To express silence, darkness, the inexpressible itself, these were Rimbaud's high aims, and though he may have failed (his Saison en Enfer admits to failure), his predictions left great hopes: "Toujours pleins du Nombre et de l'Harmonie, ces poèmes seront faits pour rester," he wrote to Demeny in May, 1871. "Au fond, ce serait encore un peu la Poésie grecque."

There are some indications that Rimbaud was acquainted with the works of Eliphas Lévi. L'Histoire de la Magie, Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie, and especially Les Clefs des Grands Mystères, are present in translation in the Rimbaldian doctrine which these pages have attempted to present. These works, along with Franck's Histoire de la Kabbale (1843) and the works of Baudelaire, were in the Municipal Library of Charleville,[152] and although there is no concrete evidence that Rimbaud borrowed them, Enid Starkie has affirmed that "there is nothing in Rimbaud's theory of poetry which is not to be found somewhere in these writings" (p. 103). The full force of Lévi's great vision may have revealed itself to Rimbaud through the former's article on Allegory, included in the Nouvelle encyclopédie théologique published under the direction of the Abbé Migne in 1851. Lévi's tone, the sureness of his language, the markedly religious, almost incantatory quality of his affirmations--all seem to have announced the themes and major preoccupations of the poetry envisioned by Rimbaud twenty years later:

> Nous entendons par harmonie de la nature l'accord des similitudes et la gradation des dissemblances dans la distribution du mouvement, de la vie et de la beauté à tous les êtres ... Nous disons le sentiment de ces harmonies, et nous dirions presque le pressentiment, en appliquant ce mot aux hommes qui luttent encore dans les ténèbres de la vie mortelle ... N'avons-nous pas nos préférences en fait de couleurs, de parfums et de mélodies, et ces attraits comme ces répugnances ne s'expliquent-ils point par certaines correspondances cachées entre nos dispositions morales et les objets qui affectent agréablement ou désagréablement notre organisation physique? ...

> Il existe, disons-nous, des harmonies réelles et des correspondances essentielles, antérieurement à toute poésie, la poésie n'étant d'ailleurs que le sentiment de ces correspondances et de ces harmonies, dont la prophétie supérieure à la poésie sera la révélation. 153

Such intimations appear interspersed throughout Lévi's major works, and are compelling evidence of the seriousness of his intent as well as of the legitimate influence he was to exercise on the great literary figures of his time. In his Histoire de la Magie, he affirmed: "Les vrais poètes sont les envoyés de Dieu sur la terre." The poet, above all, was the true visionary, seeing in every aspect of the "real" world a correspondent element in the spiritual one; all thoughts, in the name of analogy, conspire in the poet to reveal the absolute. Indeed, the search for this absolute principle was the task of the poet, who would find it, Lévi maintained, through "la science magique". If the principles which the Magus draws from his precursors are often diluted and sometimes confusing, they had the salutary effect of leading him to synthesize a doctrine whose components are virtually limitless. This effort of synthesis Mercier has called "assez nouveau en matière d'occultisme traditionnel" (p. 66). In an age where even the most cursory examination reveals a plethora of pseudo-occultist baggage, it becomes clear why and how the Abbé Constant stood out. For the first time, at least since the Enlightenment, here was someone who chose to honor creative intelligence (Guénon was to call it intellective intuition) over mere contemplation, the active search over the passive revelation. Romanticism in general had taken form along essentially similar lines. When Vulliaud, the author of a study of the Cabbala, compares Lévi to Nietzsche, it is in the sense that both pointed to Man's hidden powers in the face of a rigid, empirical, Occidental conception of Nature. More than any preceding it, this was the age, in France, of the Surhomme--a Surhomme of the mind.

Mercier notes (p. 38) that Villiers de l'Isle Adam introduced Mallarmé to Eliphas Lévi's Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie in 1866. Four years earlier, writing in l'Artiste, Mallarmé offered the following observation on the relationship between the poetic vision and esoteric doctrine:

> Toute chose sacrée et qui veut demeurer sacrée s'enveloppe de mystère. Les religions se retranchent à l'abri d'arcanes dévoilés au seul prédestiné: L'art a les siens ... Ainsi les premiers venus entrent de plain-pied dans un chef-d'oeuvre, et depuis qu'il y a des poètes, il n'a pas été inventé, pour l'écartement de ces importuns, une langue immaculée, des formules hiératiques dont l'étude aride aveugle le profane et aiguillonne le patient fatal. 154

Certainly the Symbolist poet sought to invent this "immaculate language", some (including Mallarmé) going so far as to make a certain poetic intransigence an art in itself. Yet while poetry may have needed to protect itself against the uninitiate, esoterists in general would have profited by the shedding of the unnecessarily obscure trappings which had always characterized them in Europe. Mercier's and Viatte's studies are replete with tedious catalogues of "illuminators", "magnetizers", "mesmerizers" and their ilk, all practicing their "secret magic" in the name of spiritual progress and the discovery of the "true" self. It is interesting to note that secrecy had its price, that the uninitiate had but to submit to "treatment" to attain the perception and accompanying well-being of the Illuminé. Curiously, the Magnetism of Mesmer and Puysegur, among others, "avait eu un succès considérable dans tous les milieux et chez les littérateurs en particulier."[155]

> De l'extase magnétique à l'inspiration directe, telle que la concevront plus tard certains poètes post-baudelairiens, la voie est toute tracée: conscience en sommeil, délire apparent, facultés agrandies, visions suprêmes entrevues, langage transfiguré ... Le magnétisme des années 1840-1860, malgré ses vulgarités, apporte un moyen d'inspiration nouveau aux poètes de la fin du siècle. 156

In Le Grand Secret (1921), Maurice Maeterlinck seems to raise much of the copper-cash hocus-pocus, as well as the more serious and sincere delvings into the collective unconscious, to the stature of myth. Evoking the period mentioned above by Mercier, he notes that a fundamental element of the creative imagination at the turn of the century "était ensevelie dans les ténèbres de l'inconscience ou de la subconscience," but that "depuis un certain nombre d'années, des études scientifiques sur l'hypnotisme et la médiumnité [sic] ont prodigieusement agrandi et éclairé cet extraordinaire et féerique domaine de l'inconscient."[157]

Maeterlinck is no exception to the mood of the times when he discourses at length on "vital fluids", "astral lights", and Man's "Odic" essence. Mercier notes (p. 43) that at the turn of the century, a Colonel de Rochas had somehow managed to isolate certain "odic" or "magnetic" fluids which he held to be the tangible representations of transcendent "feelings".

By the mid-1850's, magnetism and hypnotism are joined by Swedenborgism which, although more popular in England and the United States, found favor in France due in part to the efforts of Emile Broussais, whose Régénération du Monde (1842) announced a New Jerusalem for its adepts. This modified form of Swedenborgism had simple aims: "...s'entretenir avec Dieu et avec les anges, communiquer avec le monde invisible, par l'extase et la prière, sans recourir pour autant à des rituels magiques traditionnels."[158] Spiritism, which arose on the heels of Swedenborgism in 1856, owed much to Rivail (whose pseudonym was Allan Kardec) and, later, to Camille Flammarion, who was one of the pillars of La Revue Spirite. The so-called "spiritists" were not interested in a New Jerusalem, nor did they call for a new and glorious Age for humanity and the improved socio-intellectual human condition which that age would provide. "Les morts seuls les préoccupent."[159] In L'Erreur spirite (1923), René Guénon has called Spiritism "une déviation de l'esprit religieux, conforme à cette mentalité 'scientiste' qui est celle de beaucoup de nos contemporains" (p. 3). Grouping all these vulgar offshoots of traditional Theosophy and early Illuminism under the general heading of "Neo-spiritualism", Guénon's well-documented and exhaustive study has pointed to the ravages wrought upon its victims:

> Quand nous parlons ici de ravages et de victimes, ce ne sont point de simples métaphores: toutes les choses de ce genre, et le spiritisme plus encore que les autres, ont pour résultat de déséquilibrer et de détraquer irrémédiablement une foule de malheureux qui, s'ils ne les avaient rencontrées sur leur chemin, auraient pu continuer à vivre d'une vie normale. Il y a là un péril qui ne saurait être tenu pour négligeable, et que, dans les circonstances actuelles surtout, il est particulièrement nécessaire et opportun de dénoncer avec insistance; et ces considérations viennent, pour nous, renforcer la préoccupation, d'ordre plus général, de sauvegarder les droits de la vérité contre toutes les formes de l'erreur (p. 4).

In a slightly different vein, the Saint-Simonians also move away from the traditional sacred doctrines. As of the 1860's, their efforts turn to an ideal of material progress mitigated by a call for equity and justice. Unlike the Freemasons of the preceding century, however, the Saint-Simonians did not hold to truths reserved exclusively for the initiate, but believed that all men are worthy of knowledge and of "une réintégration dans l'ordre du monde".[160]

These myriad "forms of error" which Guénon has criticized found their expression in the works of Joséphin Péladan (1859-1918). Joseph-Aimé was his real name, but he borrowed that of Joséphin Soulary, who was Péladan's closest friend.[161] A native of Lyon, which was a center of occultist activity, he founded La France littéraire in that city. His literary companions included Cardinal de Bonald, a traditionalist of some repute and much integrity, as well as Xavier Bastide, Victor de Laprade, and Blanc de Saint-Bonnet. Moving to Nîmes in 1872, Péladan discovered the writings of Mesmer, Fabre d'Olivet, and Lacuria. But it was Eliphas Lévi who made the greatest impression on him. Victor-Emile Michelet tells of Péladan's warning to a young disciple: "Méfie-toi surtout de la lecture d'Eliphas Lévi, un mage admirable qui te donnerait l'illusion de savoir et la témérité d'oser."[162] Indeed, Péladan's Salon de 1883, written for L'Artiste, began with the words: "Je crois à l'Idéal, à la Tradition, à la Hiérarchie!" It is said to have created quite a scandal.[163]

Two years later, Péladan published Le Vice suprême. Written at twenty-three, this novel had twenty printings and is probably the single most important of Péladan's works. Le Vice suprême was the first volume of a series (Péladan called it "une éthopée") titled La Décadence Latine, which included Curieuse, Initiation Sentimentale, and A Coeur perdu.

Le Vice suprême is a panorama of contemporary European society at its decadent worst; in a series of loosely connected scenes, the author presents a modern allegory of Sodom and Gomorrah, the central protagonists being members of the aristocracy, as well as representatives of the Church. In his preface to the edition of 1887, Barbey d'Aurevilly wrote that the title was too abstract, unnecessarily mysterious, and misleading: "Il n'y a point de vice suprême. Il y a tous les vices qui, depuis le commencement du monde, pourrissent les nations, et avant même qu'elles aient disparu dans la mort, dansent la danse macabre de leur agonie...."[164] Yet even d'Aurevilly has noted that the Princess d'Este, wife of the bestial Malatesta, is the main character and a symbol of unmitigated evil, incarnating a somewhat novel if not altogether convincing vice:

> La brutalité d'un mari bestial lui avait donné, dès la première nuit de son mariage, le dégoût des voluptés charnelles, et d'une Messaline ou d'une Théodora qu'elle aurait pu être, elle se fit un autre genre de monstre ... Elle fut le monstre métaphysique (p. x).

Péladan steps into his narrative frequently to bring it much-needed light; in chapter XII, titled "Hermétique", he provides the single most important characteristic of the "metaphysical monster":

> Il est un péché de la chair qu'ignorent les romanciers [sic] et qu'on croirait perdu, si l'homme pouvait perdre un vice. Au confessionnel nul ne s'en accuse, et son nom ne se lit pas dans beaucoup de dictionnaires: la démonialité. 165

Demoniality, Péladan states, is "le péché lettré, patricien et décadent par excellence" (p. 65). More than imagination is needed to understand this vice; one must be well-read in occultism to define it: "C'est la copulation des hommes avec les démons succubes, des femmes avec les démons incubes" (p. 66). This is what the hero, Mérodack, must conquer if Europe is to survive, for men and women have transcended, as it were, the seven deadly sins, have discovered new and special aptitudes for evil:

> Les sorciers se frottaient d'une pommade hallucinatoire qui leur donnait des rêves obscènes. Réveillés, ils prétendaient revenir du sabbat. L'imagination suffit à y transporter. Le baiser du bouc se donne aussi avec la pensée ... Dans sa contemplation titillante, la princesse se sent envahie et subjuguée par son rêve; la sueur perle à son front ... Elle a ce cauchemar: l'obscénité des choses. Des boucs, louchant de lubricité, brisent leurs cornes en des caresses furieuses... (p. 68).

Unlike goats, of course, these specialists in lubricity have normal eyesight, yet systematically choose the sexual delights of demonic introspection, plunging their waking fantasies into a state of dream: "L'excitation cervicale apaisée, le fantôme, crée par le délire volontaire, reste à l'état de larve fluidique dans l'atmosphère astrale individuelle." Even remorse can annihilate itself metaphysically, "en raison du libre arbitre qui permet à l'homme la perversité sans limite" (p. 67). Thus society (Latin Europe, in Péladan's thesis) is doomed to a destructive desire for the decadent dream, commerce with the forces of Evil, an obsession with the _succubi_ and _incubi_ of demonology. The author is present at all times in this highly didactic work. One of his _débauchées_, Milady Astor, is the incarnation of what Péladan has called "L'esthétique du mal":

> Raisonner, justifier, héroïser le mal, en établir le rituel, en démontrer l'excellence, est-ce pas pis que le commettre? ... Il y a de l'aveuglement dans la satisfaction de l'instinct, et de la démence dans la perpétration du méfait, mais concevoir et théoriser exigent une opération calme de l'esprit, qui est le _Vice Suprême_ (p. 169).

Only Mérodack, the Magus-hero, can offer a glimmer of hope for the salvation of Europe; yet he is not a Catholic, as Barbey d'Aurevilly seemed to hope in his preface:

> M. Joséphin Péladan a, pour les besoins dramatiques de son oeuvre, composé [ce] personnage ... avec beaucoup d'art, de sérieux et même de bonne foi; seulement, on est bien tenu de le lui dire, pour un catholique qu'il est, partout ailleurs, dans son livre, et qui fait du catholicisme la seule certitude de salut qui reste aux nations latines décrépites, c'est là une redoutable inconséquence, et même, c'est beaucoup plus... (p. xii).

D'Aurevilly's thinly-disguised hyperbole reveals the spirit of the time, although traditional Church dogma does not seem to have diminished Péladan's wide readership. A character such as Mérodack, d'Aurevilly believed, is completely antithetical to the Catholic ideal, is too much larger than life, and has an irresistible effect on the otherwise predictable debaucheries of the other characters. A creation such as Mérodack, he concludes, "supprime cet intérêt que tout roman a pour but d'exciter" (p. xii). True enough, perhaps, but really beside the point. Péladan had taken it upon himself to provide a solution to a very real problem, of which his characters are the allegorical representations. In numerous declarations of a "doctrinal" nature, Mérodack explains the terrible spiritual bankruptcy of the times. He is, he declares, a monarchist, "parce que je suis hiérarchiste." When asked what he believes aristocracy to consist in, Mérodack replies: "En aristocratie d'intelligence et en aristocratie de dévouement. Se sacrifier à une idée, à une cause, au prochain, c'est imiter le Sauveur; et manifester une pensée en une oeuvre c'est prouver l'âme. La noblesse est tête au coeur, vertu ou chef-d'oeuvre..." (p. 107). Catholic ideas, one would guess, are not exclusive of Mérodack's role as a Magus. (Nor is a somewhat dubious sense of humor; when the Princess invites him to dance with her, he says: "Je ne danse jamais; j'ai trop d'idées dans la tête, et mon respect pour elles m'empêche de les faire sautiller" [pp. 118-119].) Péladan describes his Magus as a "poète inconsolable de n'être pas un génie, mystique désolé de n'être pas un saint..." (p. 121). Having perceived the "Sphinx of Initiation", Mérodack had discovered hermetism through metaphysics. Barbey d'Aurevilly may have been careless in his reading, for Péladan writes of his hero:

> D'une enfance pieuse il gardait une grande foi catholique; s'étayant de sa science kabalistique, il souriait de Kant et d'Hegel, fous qui ne pouvant éclaircir le mystère humain l'ont nié, téméraires qui de leur inautorité de décadents ont biffé la tradition universelle, y substituant leurs hypothèses de songes creux.
>
> --"Je suis un mage", avait-il dit à la princesse, et ce mot dont le sens est perdu, l'expliquait tout entier (p. 122).

One more of d'Aurevilly's objections is refuted here; indeed, Mérodack seems to be a Catholic hero in the Guénonian sense, for he combines a highly intellectual devotion to Church stricture with a larger, more encompassing view of the world which admits of the traditional notion of primordial unity beyond the fragmented and apparently disparate elements of culture and custom.

Despite his impregnable sureness, however, Mérodack is unable to turn back the empire of "le Vice Suprême", the systematic corruption of the Idea. "Finis Latinorum", written in phosphorescent letters by the cabbalist Seichem, is the epitaph of this work: "L'Occident, l'Occident nie Dieu!" (p. 331). Yet Péladan's aim is accomplished, for in seeking to reconcile his friend and spiritual adviser, d'Aurevilly, with his spokesman and hero, Mérodack, he had made explicitly clear his call for a revival of traditional doctrine in the Occident. In a short, dedicatory preface to his mentor, he wrote:

> Ne voyez pour un moment dans l'hermétisme qu'une méthode d'individualisation, un mode de triple entraînement de l'esprit vers la Conception, de l'âme vers la Bonté, du corps vers la Beauté, en un mot l'exode de l'orgueil individuel vers un Kanaan d'expansion (p. 2).

Calling for a renovation of Catholicism in Europe, for the Church to abandon its immemorial suspicion of the Magus as a legitimate spiritual leader, Péladan voices what was to be one of Guénon's most earnest hopes. D'Aurevilly's objections to Mérodack are two-fold: he cannot be a true Catholic if he is familiar with and actively practices the secret doctrine of the Sacred Science (a euphemism for the Cabbala); also, Mérodack has human (that is, sexual) desires, which he struggles to contain and dominate. Certainly Péladan does not deny having sought to create these aptitudes and interests in his hero. His prefatory comments, addressed to d'Aurevilly, make this abundantly clear. Yet one wonders if Péladan's readers would have accepted a hero of ideal aspects; indeed, we must remember that, unlike Balzac, to whom Péladan has been compared,[166] the author of Le Vice suprême had a "moral" message to deliver, and believed the novel as a genre to have needed a certain modified version of traditional doctrine.[167]

With Elémir Bourges and Saint-Pol-Roux, Péladan was a charter member of the revived French Rosicrucian Society. Their "act of faith" in adhering to this society was unique in the annals of European esoterism, for it called for the cooperation of all members in the name of Art; the following declaration of intent, published in 1891, is from Michelet's memoirs:

> Actae - Rosae - Crucis
>
> La Rose-Croix du Temple
>
> Sous le Tau, la croix grecque, la croix latine, devant le Bauséant et la Rose Crucifère,
>
> En communion catholique romaine avec Hugues de Païens et RosenCreuz, le SAR PELADAN, maître de l'Ordre de la ROSE-CROIX DU TEMPLE, assisté du septénaire des commandeurs LL. SS. GARY DE LACROZE, COMTE DE LARMANDIE, COMTE ANTOINE DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD, ELEMIR BOURGES, SAINT-POL-ROUX, SAMAS,
>
> Ordonne,
>
> Au nom de Jésus, seul Dieu, et de Pierre, seul roi;
>
> A tous ceux qui entendent le douzième verset du second chapitre du Bereschit, sous peine d'être rejeté de l'Ordre à jamais,
>
> De concentrer leur effort de lumière sur le plan artistique;
>
> A cette fin et dès cette heure est crée, les institutions restant secrètes,
>
> LA ROSE-CROIX ESTHETIQUE
>
> Verbifié à Paris, en la fête de l'Ascension du Rédempteur, et signé des sept: 168

The names of the Seven follow.[169]

In his novels and essays, Péladan put forth the Rosicrucian doctrine in its "new" form. Comment on devient Artiste and L'Art idéaliste et mystique, both published in 1894, contain explicitly this "esthetic doctrine" enunciated in the original declaration of 1891: Art must conspire with Religion, so as to magnify the divine element in manifested phenomena, and call for the active participation of the reader in the fictional hierophany. "Je soutiens l'identité de la religion et de l'art," Péladan affirmed, "et je déclare mauvais le prêtre qui n'entend pas les chefs-d'oeuvres, et je déclare inférieur l'artiste qui n'entend pas le divin."[170] It has been pointed out, furthermore, that Péladan did not seek to make of "la morale" the aim of art; rather, the work of art is moral by a fatal consequence of its beauty.[171]

This strange, syncretic rebirth of the order of the Rosy Cross was a dramatic, sometimes chaotic affair, marked by serious clashes of strong personalities, yet sincere and devoid of much of the meaningless banter and purposeless obscurantism of an Eliphas Lévi's weaker moments. Michelet was being kind when he wrote of this strange group: "Il faut considérer les Rose-Croix épars dans le temps, mais dans le cycle de l'esprit bien plutôt que rassemblés en sociétés passagères et successives."[172]

With the renaissance of occultism in mid-nineteenth century French literature, which Péladan's novels benefited from and helped propagate, we rediscover the interrupted path of the medieval Alchemists. Jean Richepin's Les Blasphèmes (1884) is a collection of poems which are a landmark in the history of "literary" occultism in France between 1870 and the turn of the century. In Le Sorcier, Richepin evokes themes reminiscent of Lévi, and conceives of Time metaphorically as the mythical Ouroboros:

> Souffle, souffle, sorcier du Grand-OEuvre!
> Souffle les alambics grondants.
> Souffle dessous, regarde dedans.
> Le temps est une vieille couleuvre
> Qui tient sa queue entre ses dents. 173

Richepin's invocations bring to mind the numerous divinatory incantations which are the matter of Lévi's Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie, and tend to dilute legitimate traditional doctrine in the interest of a certain sensationalism. Richepin's Les Morts bizarres (1876), much like La Machine à gloire of Villiers de l'Isle Adam and La Science de l'Amour of Charles Cros, is a search for the absolute through the systematic application of divinatory formulae. Mercier has called these three works a "premonition" of Symbolism. Richepin saw, besides "external" and "internal" senses, a third sense, having nothing in common with the first two, which are exoteric. The third sense is esoteric; he names it "le sens de l'absolu", and pledges to exercise it, for it will help the poet to write prodigious and resplendent things. The single most important instrument of this sense, Richepin held, is analogy.[174]

With Edouard Schuré's Les Grands Initiés (1889) the Illuminist doctrine finds its phoenix, now popularized, and perhaps slightly singed by the decades of pseudo-Theosophic foolishness and the vulgar anarchy of Madame Blavatsky.[175] Subtitled Esquisse de l'Histoire secrète des Religions, Schuré's work had fifty-eight printings by 1920, and enjoyed great popular success with its sympathetic evocations of the great initiates of history, beginning with Rama and the Vedic chants which date back to the fourth milennium B.C., and ending with a life of Jesus. Schuré's tone is in keeping with that of his poetry, published some years earlier under the title La Vie mystique (1885); much like his poems, Les Grands Initiés brings to mind the writings of the early Theosophists, and embodies the major tenets of Péladan's "Rose-Croix Esthétique": Art, these prophets hoped, would order the chaos of the modern spirit, and the great esoteric tradition would provide once again a synthetic view of universal harmony. Adapting from a forgotten work of Kingsford and Maitland, The Perfect Way of Finding Christ (1882), Schuré states in his preface that "La doctrine ésotérique n'est pas seulement une science, une philosophie, une morale, une religion. Elle est 'la' science, 'la' philosophie, 'la' morale, 'la' religion, dont toutes les autres ne sont que des préparations ou des dégénérescences, des expressions partielles ou faussees, selon qu'elles y acheminent ou en dévient."[176] Taking up a favorite theme of Richepin, Schuré distinguishes between "external" and "internal" history, and gives a perceptive definition of the esoteric view: "internal" history, he says, is "la science profonde, la doctrine secrète, l'action occulte des grands initiés, prophètes ou réformateurs qui ont créé, soutenu, propagé les mêmes religions..." (p. xxviii). Evoking G.H. von Schubert's Côté nocturne de la Nature, which had inspired Madame de Staël before him, Schuré saw in the esoteric tradition "l'endroit de la conscience humaine dont l'histoire n'offre que l'envers laborieux" (p. xxviii). In the doctrine of the Illuminists, with all that it contained of early sacred writings, Schuré saw the legitimate answer to the problems of his time: "Le plus grand mal de notre temps," Schuré's introduction begins, "est que la Science et la Religion y apparaissent comme deux forces ennemies et irréductibles" (p. vii). Hoping to prove that "la doctrine des Mystères est à la source de notre civilisation" (p. xxviii), Schuré shares the optimism of the great scientist, Claude Bernard, whom he quotes: "Je suis persuadé qu'un jour viendra où le physiologiste, le poète et le philosophe parleront la même langue et s'entendront tous" (p. vii). Appealing to those in whom the empirical, "external" sense had negated the sacred, "internal" element, Schuré called for modern Man to incarnate the principles of the esoteric doctrine:

> L'esprit est la seule réalité. La matière n'est que son expression inférieure, changeante, éphémère, son dynamisme dans l'espace et le temps. --La création est éternelle et continue comme la vie.-- Le microcosme-homme est par sa constitution ternaire (esprit, âme et corps) l'image et le miroir du macrocosme-univers (monde divin, humain et naturel), qui est lui-même l'organe du Dieu ineffable, de l'Esprit absolu, lequel est par sa nature: Père, Mère et Fils (essence, substance et vie). --Voilà pourquoi l'homme, image de Dieu, peut devenir son verbe vivant. La gnose ou la mystique rationnelle de tous les temps est l'art de trouver Dieu en soi en développant les profondeurs occultes, les facultés latentes de la conscience.-- L'âme humaine, l'individualité est immortelle par essence. Son développement a lieu sur un plan tour à tour descendant et ascendant, par des existences alternativement spirituelles et corporelles.-- La réincarnation est la loi de son évolution. Parvenue à sa perfection, elle y échappe et retourne à l'Esprit pur, à Dieu dans la plénitude de sa conscience. De même que l'âme s'élève au-dessus de la loi du combat pour la vie lorsqu'elle prend conscience de son humanité, de même elle s'élève au-dessus de la loi de la réincarnation lorsqu'elle prend conscience de sa divinité (p. xx).

With Frederic Amiel (1821-1881), Schuré conceives of these successive states of "being" in terms of spheres, the smallest, least significant of which contains in itself the desire to be contained by one which is superior to it. The "Ideal", in each case, is the anticipation, the prophetic vision of this existence which is superior to its own, and to which each being always aspires:

> Ainsi veille, disciple de la vie, chrysalide d'un ange, travaille à ton éclosion future, car l'Odyssée divine n'est qu'une série de métamorphoses de plus en plus éthérées, où

> chaque forme, résultat des précédentes, est la condition de celles qui suivent. La vie divine est une série de morts successives où l'esprit rejette ses imperfections et ses symboles et cède à l'attraction croissante du centre de gravitation ineffable, du soleil de l'intelligence et de l'amour. 177

From Rama to Jesus, including Krishna, Hermes, Moses, Orpheus, Pythagoras and Plato, Schuré's "Grands Initiés" are incarnations of the sacred doctrine, for they had looked to the revelations of their "internal" lives and of Nature, and had seen the principles of the Absolute. Surprisingly, there is no mention in Schuré's work of occult magic, necromancy, chiromancy, spiritism, magnetism or any of the myriad vulgarizations which had given this doctrine its eighteenth-century lie. The signs of the "Grands Initiés" point to the "Alchimie du Verbe" of the Symbolist poets, making of it, as it were, an alchemy of the Self. Of Les Grands Initiés, Michaud has made one of the major stepping-stones of the Symbolist period, seeing in it a declaration of faith in the double role of the poet, who is both thinker and Magus:

> Schuré, à la fois occultiste et poète, versé dans l'ésotérisme et fréquentant les cercles littéraires, était particulièrement bien placé pour l'apercevoir et en signaler l'importance. Analysant l'état d'âme de ses contemporains, leurs doutes et leur misère, il indiquait le sens de leurs inspirations et de leurs pressentiments; expliquant la place et la valeur des doctrines ésotériques, il montrait à ces poètes épris à la fois de raison et de mystère la voie qui leur convenait le mieux. Nul doute

> qu'il n'ait joué là, auprès de ses cadets, le rôle d'annonciateur et qu'il n'ait contribué pour une forte part à précipiter la synthèse poétique et philosophique qui se préparait. 178

Writing on the legend of the "Great Initiates", Lucien Roure (a Jesuit) considered Schuré to be, in 1926, "l'occultiste le plus connu dans les milieux littéraires et mondains."[179]

Michaud places the resurgence of esoterism in French literary life at 1889--the date, significantly, of Schuré's Les Grands Initiés. Indeed, Michaud credits this resurgence with having brought together into one general perspective all the currents and offshoots of the budding movement, including idealism, spiritualism, and mysticism: "Tous ces courants trouvaient leur voie, leur point de convergence dans un mouvement dont nous avons noté depuis quelques années la renaissance symptomatique: l'ésotérisme."[180] The revival of esoteric thought in this period seems to go hand in hand with much of the theoretical writing of several of the early Symbolists. Conceiving of poetry as a function of cyclic evolution, Jean Moréas wrote in his Manifeste Littéraire (1886): "Ainsi, dans cet art, les tableaux de la nature, les actions des humains, tous les phénomènes concrets ne sauraient se manifester eux-mêmes; ce sont là des apparences sensibles destinées à représenter leurs affinités ésotériques avec des Idées primordiales."[181] In Traité du Verbe (1887), René Ghil writes of the esoteric poet as the only writer who will create "la vision seule digne: le réel et suggestif SYMBOLE d'où, palpitante pour le rêve, en son intégrité nue se lèvera l'Idée prime et dernière, ou Vérité."[182] In La Littérature de tout à l'heure (1889), Charles Morice writes of the poet as man's only hope for a return to primordial simplicity, and conceives of the poet's genius as consisting "à dégager des accidents, des habitudes, des préjugés, des conventions et de toutes les contingences l'élément d'éternité et d'unité qui luit, au delà des apparences, au fond de toute essence humaine."[183]

Mallarmé has pointed frequently to a primordial paradigm, beyond time and space, where Analogy, in the form of the image in a mirror, allows the poet to participate during one fleeting instant in a long-forgotten life:

> Je me mire et me vois ange! et je meurs, et j'aime
> -- Que la vitre soit l' art, soit la mysticité--
> A renaître, portant mon rêve en diadème,
> Au ciel antérieur où fleurit la Beauté! 184

Yet participation in the Ideal must necessarily be ephemeral, due not to last; even the sanctum of poesy is incapable of staying the profane, for

> Ici-bas est maître: sa hantise
> Vient m'écoeurer parfois jusqu'en cet abri sûr...

and the haunted, occasional resident of l'Azur must ask for "l'oubli de l'Idéal cruel."

Jacques Scherer has noted Mallarmé's life-long interest in esoteric doctrine.[185] Anne Osmont has hinted that Mallarmé may have looked to the Cabbala in the development of his letter-values.[186] In Sortilèges du Verbe, Matila Ghyka has stated: "Mallarmé était dans la tradition d'une doctrine ésotérique remontant par-delà Paracelse et le moyen âge à la Kabbale, à l'hermétisme alexandrin, à Platon et à Pythagore."[187] Ghyka has gone so far as to state categorically that for Mallarmé, "l'analogie est la seule logique possible."[188]

In a letter to Victor-Emile Michelet, Mallarmé wrote that esoterism was "le commentaire des signes purs, à quoi obéit toute littérature, jet immédiat de l'esprit."[189] Signing "Votre très persuadé Stéphane Mallarmé", the poet seemed to acknowledge in Michelet one of the major forces behind the nineteenth-century renaissance of esoteric symbolism. The title is almost pleonastic in our context, for Michelet, along with Eliphas Lévi, Alphonse Esquiros, and many of the better-known literary figures of the early Symbolist movement in France, were in a sense reaffirming the revelations of the Alchemists' Great Work in the domain of artistic expression. In his preface to a study of Michelet, Gaston Bachelard observes that "le poète veut actualiser poétiquement l'alchimie traditionnelle."[190] Indeed, Bachelard adds, "les puissances symboliques, les puissances de l'occultisme, les puissances poétiques partent d'une même source, viennent des mêmes profondeurs."[191] In his fine, pioneering study of Michelet, Richard Knowles has said of his subject: "son plus grand mérite a été d'avoir réalisé dans ses oeuvres ... la synthèse de l'ésotérisme et de la littérature" (p. 2). Michelet saw the "internal" sense as the only valid matter of poetry.

Born in 1861 in Nantes, Victor-Emile was not related to the famous historian. Of modest means, his parents were opposed to his pursuing literary studies, and urged him to become a notary. Settling in Paris to complete his business studies, Michelet soon tired of the enforced discipline, and developed lasting friendships with kindred spirits: Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Stanislas de Guaïta, and Catulle Mendès. He read the works of Fabre d'Olivet and Eliphas Lévi, and took an active part in the Symbolist movement, frequenting the offices of Edmond Bailly's Art Indépendant, "qui joignait les esprits du Symbolisme à ceux de l'Esotérisme."[192] Bailly (the pseudonym of Henri-Edmond Limé) was one of the first publishers of the Symbolist poets,[193] as well as the editor of the Theosophic review La Haute Science. Michelet soon became a sort of Mallarmé to the circle of esoterist-poets, encouraging them in their daring efforts, and carving out an esthetic doctrine of his own. In his De l'Esotérisme dans l'Art (1891), Michelet wrote:

> Il est des hommes qui ont mission de révéler

> la Beauté. Ce sont les Poètes.
>
> Qu'est-ce que le Poète?
>
> C'est une des incarnations sous lesquelles se manifeste le Révélateur, le Héros, l'homme que Carlyle appelle "un messager envoyé de l'impénétrable infini avec des nouvelles pour nous." Cette conception du héros, exprimée par un visionnaire de génie, est la directe conséquence d'une autre conception universellement admise par les occultistes et les mystiques, et formulée ainsi par Novalis: "Tout être créé est une révélation de la chair." Cette conception, nous la retrouverons dans tous les poèmes sacrés de l'antiquité....
>
> Le poète doit avoir pénétré ce que Goethe appelait "le secret ouvert." 194

Esoterism in art, Michelet seems to suggest, is a view according to which all components of substantial life are part of a single unifying principle, and are at once its mirrors and its source. The so-called "occultist" notion of the world thus becomes the perception of the diversity and the unity of the world: infinite diversity, and essential unity. The early Pagans arrived at a notion of God via initiatic rites which served to transmit a certain knowledge of this unifying principle (Goethe's "open secret" in the text above). Knowles has suggested that Michelet was familiar with the following lines of Olympiodorus in his Commentaire sur le Phédon: "Le but des mystères est de ramener les âmes à leur principe, à leur état primitif et final, c'est-à-dire la vie, en Zeus dont elles sont descendues, avec Dionysos qui les y ramène."[195] There is every reason to believe that Michelet's assertions left a deep impression on Stanislas de Guaïta, whose Essais de Sciences Maudites, published between 1891 and 1897, contain the central elements of Michelet's "hiérophanie".

Guaita found the "real" world deceiving, sterile, hideous; the Hermetic poet, he believed, was the truly privileged member of an otherwise doomed society, finding refuge in the comforting world of dream and the noble lies of art. To these poets he declared, in Rosa Mystica (1885): "Vous êtes les Initiateurs et les Aïeux,"[196] and of Baudelaire, he said: "Comme tout grand poète, Baudelaire est un symboliste: il drape ses plus belles conceptions du voile mythique."[197] Written in September, 1844, Rosa Mystica is the best of many mediocre poems in the collection published a year later under the same title:

> Rose Mystique, au doux parfum solliciteur,
> Fleur d'ironique amour, de fol espoir sans trêves!
> Illusion splendide, épanouie aux grèves
> Que dore et transfigure un Idéal menteur!
>
> Moi ta dupe? --Eh bien, soit!...Pourvu que ta senteur
> Evoque en moi l'extase enlaçante des rêves,
> Si bien qu'inattentif au vol des heures brèves,
> Je savoure la vie en lent dégustateur.
>
> Qu'importe le Réel? --Divaguer à ses charmes:
> Ma candeur attendrie aura de douces larmes
> Pour l'être inerte au mal comme inerte au plaisir;
>
> Et, les yeux clos, flairant la fleur cabalistique,
> Je saurai m'absorber et me fondre, à loisir,
> Dans le charme imposteur de mon Rêve mystique. 198

Michelet, who was his friend, writes of Guaïta's "juvénile gaucherie", yet announces his genuine interest in alchemy and traditional doctrine: "Poète comme adepte, il était servant de la tradition."[199] In this, as in his tumultuous and brief life, Guaita was marked by Péladan. Michelet states that Le Vice Suprême was the turning-point in Guaita's life, and the beginning of a powerful doctrinal bond between the two writers: Europe, the Occident, was the breeding-ground of efficiency, all notions of spiritual growth were abandoned in favor of an ideal of material progress, the Magus was in disrepute. The Poet's mission was to put forth sacred doctrine--unequivocal and impregnable. Of Guaïta, Michelet wrote: "Pour vêtir l'inexprimable d'une forme si précise, pour incarner l'idée initiatique dans un langage si certain, il fallait ses belles qualités."[200]

"Le but unique et final de l'initiation," Guaïta wrote, "est la réintégration des sous-multiples dans une Unité Divine."[201] This unity is maintained in all early sacred writings, through the careful and persistent use of analogy, the result of which, for the Symbolists, became correspondence. Inexpressible in terms of "real" time or substance, analogy, Michelet held, is "un rapport que l'esprit découvre entre des faits ou des fonctions: ce rapport n'est pas matériel, mais vital ou spirituel. L'analogie ne peut être maniée en conséquence que par l'intuition et non par le raisonnement."[202] In a very important sense, this is what Schuré had hoped to "prove" in his Grands Initiés, and Péladan, in his Introduction aux Sciences Occultes some years later, evokes Schuré's Hermes when he writes: "La méthode magique s'appelle l'Analogie: elle suppose l'inconnu parallèle au connu. C'est un dyptique horizontal et l'arcane majeur n'a point d'obscurité... l'invisible est comme le visible pour l'accomplissement de l'Unité."[203] The *arcanum* in question, of course, is Solomon's Seal, *L'Etoile*, the seventeenth of the ancient Tarot, which André Breton made the sign of a great work some fifty years later.

Writing in a family magazine in 1890, Michelet summed up the preoccupations of the preceding decade, which brought to French society a strong reaction to scientism and an atmosphere favorable to many a self-styled Magus:

> Ces dernières années ont vu une renaissance de ce qu'on appelle le merveilleux. L'hypnotisme, le magnétisme, le spiritisme ont passionné les esprits. Les mages existant aujourd'hui sont donc devenus la proie d'un de ces engouements dans lesquels Paris se jette avec la même vitesse qu'il en sort. On trouve là une nouveauté qui pouvait distraire. Et maintenant les mages sont aussi demandés que les toréadors. On veut maintenant un mage dans les salons, comme on voulait jadis un monologuiste ... Alors on vit d'aimables jeunes gens s'improviser Kabbalistes, puisque le vent de la mode soufflait de ce côté, puis tant bien que mal amuser les Parisiennes en quête d'inédit, grâce à quelques vagues notions des sciences occultes d'application ... Ils tiraient les cartes, endormaient les sujets de bonne volonté ... Mais à travers tant de bouffonneries un mouvement sérieux se dessine. [204]

Serious movements do take shape in these strange times, and hope to shake the rigid empirical code of the Occident. Michelet's group was probably the most instrumental in the change of mood. Including Guaita, Papus, Péladan, Eliphas Lévi, Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, Albert Poisson, Albert Jounet, and many others, Michelet called his group *Les Compagnons de la Hiérophanie*.

Stanislas de Guaïta was perhaps the most enterprising member of this interesting society, for he founded, and was the Grand Master of, an occultist society which he named *L'Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix*. The "Supreme Council" of the revived order, which included Papus, Paul Adam, Jounet, Sédir and Michelet, established three degrees for its adepts: a baccalaureate, a "licence," and a *Doctorat en Kabbale*; study and examinations made it possible for one to move up in the hierarchy. Guaïta sought the participation of Joséphin Péladan, the now-famous "Sar Mérodak" of *Le Vice suprême*. Péladan, however, "avait une âme de chef, et ne pouvait souffrir d'être le second."[205] With Elémir Bourges, Léonce de Larmandie and a few others, he founded his own group. The two orders did much to revive the ancient society of the "Rosy Cross", founded in Germany in the late fourteenth century by the Christian mystic Rosenkreuz. Guaïta and Péladan were fierce rivals,[206] but their disagreements were of a purely personal nature and did not involve doctrine. Of Péladan, Michelet writes: "Il avait consenti à descendre pour éblouir le vulgaire."[207] As for Guaita's group, "La Rose-Croix n'eut pas une très grande portée et tombait en sommeil avant la mort prématurée de l'organisateur."[208] Of the two, however, Guaïta seems to have made the greater effort, for he established a program of occult studies, of meditation, and of doctrinal propaganda. In his Amori et Dolori Sacrum (1903), Maurice Barrès contributes a precious chapter to the history of these movements, and notes the importance of the Rosicrucian revival in a desacralized Occident:

> L'Ecole matérialiste officielle occupait presque tous les débouchés intellectuels, menaçant ainsi de faire disparaître à jamais les hauts enseignements des hermétistes et des kabbalistes chrétiens. A côté des classiques du positivisme, la Rose-Croix Kabbalistique créa donc des classiques de la Kabbale, Eliphas Lévi, Wronski, Fabre d'Olivet, et mit à l'étude les oeuvres des véritables théosophes, Jacob Boehm, Swedenborg, Martinez Pasqualis [sic], Saint-Martin, qui sont les seuls que la théosophie, digne de ce véritable nom, connaîtra plus tard, comme ce sont les seuls qui furent connus du quinzième au dix-neuvième siècle. ... Grâce à cet ordre de la Rose-Croix, une véritable aristocratie d'intellectuels était créée dans l'initiation, un Collège de France de l'ésotérisme était constitué et son influence s'étendait vite au loin. 209

While Barrès seems to have been fascinated by the revival of Theosophy in the last years of the nineteenth century, however, his attitude towards the doctrine was characteristic of most literati at the time. As Guaïta wrote his numerous essays on the "Accursed Sciences", he would pass them on to his friend, urging him to take an active part in the new movement, but to no avail. Barrès writes: "Je ne pus jamais les prendre que pour de magnifiques invitations au voyage" (p. 139).

Papus (Gérard Encausse), who had belonged to the school of Guaïta, wrote an article in 1898, titled L'OEuvre de Réalisation de Stanislas de Guaïta, in which he traces the troubled recent history of esoterism in France, which had led to bloody struggles between the White Societies (Illuminists and Martinists) and the Red Societies (Jacobins), and been partially responsible for the Revolution of 1789. The spiritualist societies were crushed in that fray, Papus notes, but they were not annihilated, and slowly "se receuillirent dans le travail et dans le silence et s'attachèrent à conquérir les intellectuels plus que la masse qui fut abandonnée aux philosophes et aux athées." Fabre d'Olivet, Eliphas Lévi, Hoëné Wronski, along with a small circle of sympathizers, Papus says, kept the doctrine alive, "gardaient et augmentaient le trésor de l'occultisme...." It was in their spirit, Papus concludes, that Guaïta's group came into being. With those stubborn and inspired Compagnons de la Hiérophanie, "un mouvement de diffusion serait entrepris, destiné à sélectionner, par le travail et l'examen, les intellectuels capables d'adapter la tradition ésotérique au siècle qui allait s'ouvrir."[210]

Certainly this was the stated objective of the societies of Guaïta and Péladan. The new movement was to find its most far-reaching expression in the school of Papus, whose Groupe Indépendant d'Etudes Esotériques came into existence in a series of secret meetings at Chamuel's Librairie du Merveilleux at 29, Rue de Trévise. Its charter members included Paul Sédir, Barlet, and Victor-Emile Michelet. Proclaiming that "la Vérité est Une", their justification, they held, was the fact that "dans toute philosophie, dans toute religion, dans tout art véritable, on peut trouver quelque manifestation de la Vérité Une."[211] Papus founded two official reviews, L'Initiation and Le Voile d'Isis. A third, the more "literary" Psyché, under the editorship of Michelet, was short-lived and had a total of seven issues (November, 1891, to December, 1892). The first issue of Psyché outlined its aims, and held that "Tout Art est secondaire qui n'est pas basé sur une philosophie." Its own philosophy, Psyché stated, was "Spiritualiste et Synthétique".[212] Psyché did not last, for money and subscribers were in short supply. L'Initiation and Le Voile d'Isis, however, were the stepping-stone of the new movement's greatest spokesman and one of this century's most articulate masters of the Sacred Science: René Guénon (1886-1951).

CHAPTER ONE: PART TWO

NOTES

NOTES

1. Victor-Emile Michelet, Les Compagnons de la Hiérophanie (Paris, 1937), pp. 7-8.

2. Auguste Viatte, Les Sources Occultes du Romantisme, 2 vols. (Paris, 1928), I, 130.

3. Joseph de Maistre, Quatrième chapitre sur la Russie (Lyon, 1884), in Viatte, I, 17.

4. Fabre d'Olivet, Les Vers dorés de Pythagore expliqués (Paris, 1813), p. 91, in Viatte, I, 17.

5. Viatte, I, 18. See also Emile Dermenghem, Joseph de Maistre mystique (Paris, 1923), p. 40; Byse, Le Prophète du nord (Paris, n.d.), pp. ix-x; L. Augé, Notice sur Hoëné Wronski (Paris, 1865), pp. 15-16.

6. Saint-Georges de Marsais, Explication de la Genèse (Berlebourg, 1738), pp. 13-14, in Viatte, I, 18-19.

7. André Breton, "Premier Manifeste du Surréalisme," Manifestes du Surréalisme (Paris: Pauvert, 1962), p. 40.

8. Viatte, I, 21-22.

9. René Guénon, Etudes sur la Franc-Maçonnerie (Paris, 1965), p. 20.

10. Manuscript published by Emile Dermenghem, titled "Un projet de Joseph de Maistre pour l'Union des Peuples," in Vers l'Unité, March, 1927.

11. Viatte, I, 24. See also Abbé de Villars, Le Comte de Gabalis ou Entretiens sur les sciences secrètes (1742), I, 15, 20; Eckartshausen, La Nuée sur le sanctuaire (1819), p. 81.

12. See Enid Starkie, Arthur Rimbaud (New York: New Directions, 1968), pp. 95-104. Miss Starkie notes (p. 105) that "a full understanding of the intricacies of the Cabala would have been beyond his years," but that Rimbaud gathered from the books on this subject at the Municipal Library at Charleville "certain general ideas and principles which were valuable and fruitful to him."

13. Lavater to Burckhardt, from London, October 30, 1779; in Viatte, I, 159.

14. Charles Baudelaire, "L'Art Romantique," _OEuvres_ (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1962), II, 521. Hereafter cited as _OEuvres_.

15. _Ibid_., p. 547.

16. _Ibid_., "Mon Coeur mis à nu," p. 658.

17. _Ibid_., p. 651.

18. _Ibid_., p. 669.

19. Viatte, I, 28.

20. Caro, _Essai sur la vie et la doctrine de Saint-Martin_ (Paris, 1852), p. 298; in Viatte, I, 37. Ellipsis is Viatte's.

21. The translator, Matthias Claudius, published this letter five years later: "Kopie des Briefs vom Verfasser der Bücher _des Erreurs_ und _Tableau naturel_, etc." (Zurich, 1789), pp. 24-44; in Robert Amadou, _Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin: Mon portrait historique et philosophique_ (Paris, 1961), p. xii.

22. Robert Amadou, _Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin: Mon portrait historique et philosophique_ (Paris, 1961), pp. xii-xiii.

23. _Ibid_.

24. _Ibid_., pp. xiii-xiv.

25. Viatte, I, 51.

26. Papus, _Martinès de Pasqually_ (Paris, 1895), p. 101; in Viatte, I, 51.

27. Papus, _Martinésisme et Franc-Maçonnerie_ (Paris, 1899), pp. 7-8; in Viatte, I, 52. Italics mine.

28. "Les commentaires historiques de Papus sont des plus discutables; du moins avons-nous pu vérifier, _de visu_, l'authenticité des documents dont il donne le texte" (Viatte, I, 25).

29. Charles Baudelaire, "Fusées," X, _OEuvres_, II, 630.

30. Sébastien Mercier, _Tableau de Paris_, 12 vols. (Amsterdam, 1783), II, 228; in Viatte, I, 50-51.

31. See Viatte, I, 52-70.

32. Saint-Martin, Des Erreurs et de la Vérité (Paris, 1775), p. 241; in Viatte, I, 69.

33. Eliphas Lévi, The History of Magic, trans. Arthur Edward Waite (London: Rider, 1913), p. 5.

34. Emile Dermenghem, Joseph de Maistre mystique (Paris, 1923), pp. 69, 207; in Viatte, II, 66.

35. Joseph de Maistre, "Soirées IX," OEuvres V (Lyon, 1884), p. 156; in Viatte, II, 66.

36. Joseph de Maistre, "Quatrième chapitre sur la Russie," OEuvres VIII (Lyon, 1884), p. 327; in Viatte, II, 69.

37. Mme. Swetchine, Lettres (Paris, 1862), p. 84; in Viatte, II, 73.

38. Joseph de Maistre, "Soirées VIII," OEuvres V (Lyon, 1884), pp. 94, 103; in Viatte, II, 78.

39. Charles Baudelaire, "Fusées," I, OEuvres, II, 626.

40. Ibid., "Mon Coeur mis à nu," p. 663.

41. Joseph de Maistre, "Soirées" (VIII), in OEuvres, V, 97; in Viatte, II, 78.

42. De Maistre's use of this word indicates a remarkable similarity to Guénon's use of the term "Triad". (See Chapter II.)

43. Joseph de Maistre, OEuvres XII (Lyon, 1884), p. 466; in Viatte, II, 79.

44. Ibid., OEuvres IX, p. 74.

45. Madame de Staël, Lettres inédites, ed. de Gérando (Paris, 1868); in Viatte, II, 108.

46. Madame de Staël, "De l'Allemagne," OEuvres III (Paris, 1838), p. 411; in Viatte, II, 129.

47. Viatte, II, 132.

48. Ibid., p. 133.

49. Chateaubriand, "Génie du Christianisme," OEuvres (Paris: Garnier, 1861), p. 15; in Viatte, II, 135-136.

50. Saint-Martin, OEuvres Posthumes (Tours, 1807), I, 130; in Viatte, II, 135. Italics mine.

51. *Ibid.*, I, 369; in Viatte, II, 138.

52. See the letter of Ruffein to the Duchesse de Bourbon in Viatte, II, 137. Viatte states: "Il accorde le même sourire superficiel aux diverses tendances qu'il confond sous le nom de 'swedenborgisme'."

53. Sénancour, *Oberman* (Paris, 1833), II, 221-222; in Viatte, II, 141.

54. *Ibid.*

55. Fabre d'Olivet, *La Langue hébraïque restituée* (Paris, 1815), I, 195; in Viatte, II, 171.

56. Ballanche, *Palingénésie sociale* (Paris, 1832), I, 46-47; in Viatte, II, 172-173.

57. Fabre d'Olivet, *Les Vers dorés de Pythagore expliqués* (Paris, 1813), pp. 319-320; in Viatte, II, 174.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 255; in Viatte, II, 174-175.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 369; in Viatte, II, 177. Italics mine.

60. Fabre d'Olivet, *La Langue hébraïque restituée* (Paris, 1815); in Cellier, p. 133.

61. *Ibid.*, I, 32.

62. Fabre d'Olivet, *La Langue hébraïque restituée* (Paris, 1815), I, xii; in Cellier, *Fabre d'Olivet* (Paris, 1953), p. 134.

63. *La Langue hébraïque restituée*, II, 52; in Cellier, p. 137.

64. The formula is generally recognized to be the key to the Seal of Solomon, or Hexagram. See the *Dictionnaire des Symboles*, ed. Jean Chevalier (Paris: Laffont, 1969), pp. 404-405.

65. Fabre d'Olivet, *Histoire philosophique du Genre humain* (Paris, 1824), II, 460; in Cellier, p. 267. See also Robert Amadou and Robert Kanters, *Anthologie Littéraire de l'Occultisme* (Paris, 1950), pp. 188-192.

66. Cellier, p. 267.

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Histoire philosophique du Genre humain* (Paris, 1824), I, 287; in Cellier, p. 268.

69. The Souvenirs were discovered after Fabre's death, and are thought to have been mutilated by the author's daughter, who had her own notions on how the world was to remember her father. (See Cellier, Appendix, pp. 407-412.)

70. André Tanner, Les gnostiques de la Révolution, 2 vols. (Paris, 1946), I, 30; in Cellier, p. 398.

71. André Breton, Arcane 17 (Paris: Sagittaire, 1947), p. 151.

72. Cellier, p. 398.

73. Guy Michaud, La Doctrine symboliste (Paris, 1947), p. 9.

74. Cellier, p. 324. Neither source is given.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid., p. 325.

77. Balzac, OEuvres, vol. XI (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1965), pp. 267-270.

78. Charles Baudelaire, "Le Voyage," Les Fleurs du Mal (Paris: Garnier, 1961), p. 160.

79. Viatte, II, 272.

80. See Auguste Viatte, Victor Hugo et les Illuminés de son temps (Ottawa, 1942), pp. 55-97.

81. Paul Chacornac, Eliphas Lévi: Rénovateur de l'Occultisme en France, 1810-1875 (Paris, 1926), p. xiii.

82. In Chacornac, p. xiv. No source is given.

83. Alain Mercier, Les Sources Esotériques et Occultes de la Poésie Symboliste (1870-1914) (Paris, 1969), p. 51.

84. André Rolland de Renéville, Sciences maudites et Poètes maudits (Paris: "Les Cahiers d'Hermès," La Colombe, 1947), pp. 169-170; in Mercier, pp. 50-51.

85. Published in Paris by Firmin Didot Frères, "Au Bureau du Messianisme, rue Paradis-Poissonière, No. 32. 15 Août.-- 1847."

86. Hoëné Wronski, Prolégomènes du Messianisme (Paris, 1842), pp. 43-45.

87. In Prolégomènes, p. 47, Wronski gives the definition of the term téléologique as "tout ce qui tient à l'harmonie dans l'univers, dépendant de causes finales, à l'instar de desseins ou de buts prémédités."

88. Ibid., p. 45.

89. Ibid., p. 96.

90. Baudelaire, Lettres (Paris: Mercure de France, 1907), pp. 49-50; in Mercier, p. 52.

91. Baudelaire, "Curiosités esthétiques," OEuvres, II, 148.

92. The Dictionnaire des Symboles, ed. Jean Chevalier (Paris: Laffont, 1969), states (p. 422): "Dans tous les cercles ésotériques, [Isis] sera considérée comme l'Initiatrice, celle qui détient le secret de la vie, de la mort et de la résurrection."

93. Prolégomènes, p. 6

94. Baudelaire, "L'Art Romantique," OEuvres, II, 467.

95. Ibid., "Curiosités esthétiques," OEuvres, II, 271-272.

96. Anthony Hartley, Mallarmé (Penguin Books, 1965), pp. xxii-xxiii.

97. Ibid.

98. See Mercier, p. 53.

99. Jacques Scherer, Le Livre de Mallarmé (Paris: Gallimard, 1957).

100. Arthur Edward Waite, trans. Transcendental Magic, by Eliphas Lévi (New York: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1970), p. xxiv.

101. Ibid. Waite writes (p. xxvi): "Intensely suggestive on the mere surface, he is at the same time without evidence of depth; splendid in ready generalization, he is without accuracy in detail, and it would be difficult to cite a worse guide over mere matters of fact."

102. Ibid., p. xx.

103. Chacornac, p. xvii. In Eliphas Lévi Visionnaire Romantique (Paris: P.U.F., 1969), F.P. Bowman has noted (p. 7)

that some of Lévi's lyrical works permit the reader to glimpse "les opérations fondamentales de la création littéraire chez les romantiques, opérations riches en conséquences pour la poésie moderne." In La Mère de Dieu, Bowman notes, Lévi combines the realism of suffering and the cosmic quality of transcendence. "Telle fut d'ailleurs," he adds, "la grande tendance spirituelle de cette époque si peu manichéenne " (p. 24). In paraphrasing the intricate, often lyrical expressions of transcendent harmony put forth by Lévi in his Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie, in La Dernière Incarnation, and especially in Les Trois Harmonies, Bowman attaches Lévi to the simplest, most lucid expression of the Hermetic tradition, which is based on the notion of a perfect though hidden analogical correspondence between Heaven and Earth. For Lévi, Bowman writes (p. 48): "La matière est une, et émane de Dieu créateur à divers niveaux. Cette émanation est d'abord Sa parole ou Logos, le Verbe, qui prend diverses formes visibles; mais ces formes restent unies à l'invisible, au transcendant, au divin. Ainsi la terre répond aux cieux, et le monde est le songe de Dieu."

104. Chacornac, p. xvii. See also Victor-Emile Michelet, Les Compagnons de la Hiérophanie (Paris: Dorbon, 1937), p. 114.

105. Eliphas Lévi, Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie, 2 vols. (Paris, 1930), I, 51.

106. Ibid., I, 50-51.

107. Ibid., I, 361-362.

108. Eliphas Lévi, Correspondance, 5 vols. (Paris, n.d.); in Chacornac, p. 84. Date of letter is not mentioned.

109. "Le Livre Nouveau, 2ème séance. Rédaction d'E. Barrault. Ménilmontant 19 Juillet 1832. Copiée à Lyon, Février 1853-54." The manuscript as transcribed by Paul Mickey is 91 typewritten pages.

110. Mercier, p. 48.

111. Ibid.

112. A.E. Waite, trans. The History of Magic, by Eliphas Lévi (London, 1913), p. xxiii.

113. Jacques P. van der Linden, Alphonse Esquiros (Paris: Nizet, 1948), p. 5.

114. _Ibid_., p. 161.

115. Alexandre Erdan, _La France Mystique_ (Paris, 1885), p. 296; in Mercier, p. 63.

116. Van der Linden, p. 160.

117. Théophile Gautier, "Albertus," _Premières Poésies, 1830-1845_ (Paris, 1866); in Van der Linden, p. 130.

118. Alphonse Esquiros, "La Solitude," _Paris aux réverbères_; in Van der Linden, p. 131.

119. Van der Linden (p. 144) relates Arsène Houssaye's account in _La France Littéraire_ of a _séance_ in magnetism conducted by Esquiros: "Victor Hugo était tout yeux, tout oreilles. Ce grand esprit se laissa prendre plus tard aux tables tournantes; mais déjà vers 1834, Esquiros lui fit croire au diable...."

120. Victor-Emile Michelet, _Les Compagnons de la Hiérophanie_ (Paris, 1937.), p. 113.

121. _Ibid_., p. 107.

122. Mathilde Camacho, _Judith Gautier et son oeuvre_ (Paris, 1939), p. 185; in Mercier, p. 81.

123. J.E. Cirlot, _A DictionCary of Symbols_ (New York, 1962), p. 107.

124. Judith Gautier, "Les Rites Divins," _Poésies_ (Paris: Fasquelle, 1911), p. 5.

125. _Ibid_. "Au gré du rêve," p. 48.

126. We have no record of these poems, although Camacho's biography indicates that Judith Gautier sometimes read them at her _salons_. See Camacho, pp. 170-190.

127. _Poésies_, p.

128. Camacho states this passage to be from Chapter XV of _Le Livre de la Foi nouvelle_. No other source is given.

129. Judith Gautier, _Le Dragon Impérial_ (Paris, 1867), p. 229; in Camacho, p. 187.

130. Henri de Régnier, "Judith Gautier," _Les Nouvelles littéraires_, 16 August, 1930; in Camacho, p. 174.

131. Eliphas Lévi, Correspondance, IX (Paris, n.d.); in Chacornac, pp. 277-278.

132. Lévi had in mind to give the exact equivalent of his full name in Hebrew; thus his more popular name, Eliphas Lévi, would be just Alphonse Louis.

133. See Mercier, p. 13.

134. Robert Amadou, L'Occultisme (Paris, 1951), p. 19.

135. Papus, Traité élémentaire de science occulte (Paris, 1888), p. 46.

136. René Guénon, Aperçus sur l'Initiation (Paris, 1946), p. 132.

137. Robert Amadou, L'Occultisme (Paris, 1951), p. 72.

138. See Oliver Bernard, Rimbaud (London, 1962), pp. xxiv-xxvi; see also Mercier, pp. 56-59.

139. See Enid Starkie, Arthur Rimbaud (New York: New Directions, 1968), pp. 206-210.

140. Ibid., pp. 234-236.

141. "Soleil et Chair" was first titled "Credo in Unam" by Rimbaud. See Starkie, p. 50.

142. See Oliver Bernard, Rimbaud (London, 1962), p. 78.

143. Letter to Paul Demeny, 15 May, 1871. The reference is to Musset's Rolla.

144. The text is from Jowett; see Starkie, p. 120.

145. André Breton, "Premier Manifeste du Surréalisme," Manifestes du Surréalisme (Paris: Pauvert, 1962), p. 40.

146. Letter to Georges Izambard, 13 May, 1871.

147. Letter to Paul Demeny, 15 May, 1871.

148. Ballanche, Essai de Palingénésie sociale (Paris, 1832), p. 172; in Starkie, p. 125.

149. Ibid., p. 252; in Viatte, II, 221.

150. Ballanche, "Orphée," OEuvres, VI, 6; in Viatte, II, 222.

151. Enid Starkie makes a strong case for the affinities

which exist between the doctrinal writings of Ballanche, Fabre d'Olivet, and Rimbaud. See especially pp. 118-128.

152. See Godchot, Rimbaud ne varietur, 2 vols. (1936, 1938), especially pp. 255-256.

153. Nouvelle encyclopédie théologique, Vol. VII: Littérature chrétienne (Paris, 1851), pp. 57-60; in Mercier, p. 64.

154. Mallarmé, "Hérésies artistiques, l'Art pour tous," OEuvres (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), p. 259; in Mercier, p. 37.

155. Mercier, p. 39. Italics mine.

156. Ibid., p. 42.

157. Maurice Maeterlinck, Le Grand Secret (Paris: Fasquelle, 1921), pp. 278-279; in Mercier, pp. 42-43.

158. Mercier, p. 44. The author bases much of this chapter concerning the revival of occultism (pp. 37-46) upon Alexandre Erdan's La France Mystique (Paris, 1855).

159. Mercier, p. 46.

160. Ibid. See also R. Cristoflour, Prophètes du dix-neuvième siècle (Paris, 1954).

161. René Georges Aubrun, Péladan (Paris, 1904), p. 6, writes that Soulary was "impeccable dans le sonnet avant M. de Hérédia."

162. V.-E. Michelet, Les Compagnons de la Hiérophanie (Paris, 1937), p. 113.

163. Aubrun, p. 9.

164. Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, "Constitutionnel du Mardi 13 Septembre 1884," preface to Joséphin Péladan, Le Vice Suprême (Paris, 1887), p. vii.

165. Péladan, Le Vice Suprême (Paris, 1887), p. 65. Larousse lists only "démoniaque."

166. Aubrun has compared Séraphita and La Peau de Chagrin to Le Vice Suprême. Michelet states that while Péladan and Balzac both knew Eliphas Lévi and were familiar with his works, Balzac met Lévi in 1839, several years after he wrote Louis Lambert (1832) and Séraphita (1835).

Michelet also identifies the Polish officer Adam de Wierzchownia in *La Recherche de l'absolu* as none other than Hoëné Wronski. In a short study, "Séraphita," Gaston Bachelard has noted the androgynic formulation in Balzac's work of the same title. Quoting from one of Balzac's letters to Mme Hanska, November 17, 1833 (*Lettres à l'Etrangère* [Paris: Calmann-Lévy], I, 88), Bachelard pieces together the impulse and esoteric bent in the work. "Séraphita serait les deux natures en un seul être," Balzac wrote; "Il est aimé par un homme et par une femme auxquels il dit, en s'envolant aux cieux, qu'ils ont aimé l'un et l'autre l'amour qui les liait, en le voyant en lui, ange tout pur." Bachelard considers this work as the study of a profoundly androgynous nature, conceived as a means to expressing, in a subtle and fantastic way, a totally reciprocal love between two people: "L'être androgyne Séraphitus-Séraphita est l'incarnation même du génie d'aimer. De l'amour féminin et de l'amour masculin, [Balzac] fait une unité." See Gaston Bachelard, *Le Droit de rêver* (Paris: P.U.F., 1970), pp. 125-133. See also Mircea Eliade, *Technique du Yoga* (Paris, 1948), p. 236: "*Séraphita* est la dernière grande création artistique européenne au centre de laquelle se trouve le motif de l'androgyne." (One thinks also of Proust's Albertine.) Bachelard has noted two different, albeit complementary forms of "correspondences" which are clearly the moving forces in the poetics of Baudelaire and the *Etudes Philosophiques* of Balzac. The notion of *correspondances*, which is a well-known phenomenon of Baudelaire's poetry, is, Bachelard believes, one of the basic elements of Balzac's cosmogony. "Mais tandis que chez Baudelaire il s'agit toujours de correspondances sensibles, de correspondances en quelque sorte *horizontales* où les différents sens trouvent l'un par l'autre de subtils renforcements, chez Balzac les 'correspondances' sont *verticales*; elles sont swedenborgiennes. Leur principe est essentiellement du règne céleste." (Bachelard, *Le Droit de rêver*, p. 131.) Balzac cites Swedenborg as follows: "Le royaume du ciel est le royaume des motifs. L'*action* se produit dans le ciel, de là dans le monde, et par degrés dans les infiniment petits de la terre; les effets terrestres étant liés à leurs causes célestes font que tout y est *correspondant et signifiant*. L'homme est le moyen d'union entre le naturel et le spirituel." (Cited in Bachelard, *Le Droit de rêver*, p. 131.)

167. See Aubrun, *Péladan* (Paris, 1904), p. 10: "Le roman, ce genre bâtard et factice entre tous, matière de casuiste et forme de décadence, où l'écrivain doit amalgamer thèse, hypothèse et fabulation, réalisme et scepticisme, ne devait plaire, en ses nécessités, à l'esprit dogmatique et absolu de Péladan."

168. V.-E. Michelet, *Les Compagnons de la Hiérophanie* (Paris, 1937), pp. 56-57.

169. Michelet is unable to identify Samas. "Je crois qu'il s'agissait d'un personnage imaginaire portant le nom de l'Apollon assyrien." (p. 57.) The name, meaning "sky" in Arabic, may have referred to Guaita, who was also a member of the order. Albert de Pouvourville, who was active in esoteric circles towards the end of the century, took the Taoist name "Matgioi", which meant "sun".

170. Aubrun, p. 23.

171. *Ibid*.

172. V.-E. Michelet, *Les Compagnons de la Hiérophanie*, p. 22.

173. Jean Richepin, *Les Blasphèmes* (Paris, 1884), p. 226; in Mercier, p. 108.

174. Richepin, *Les Morts bizarres* (Paris, 1876), pp. 224-235; in Mercier, pp. 111-112.

175. See René Guénon, *Le Théosophisme, histoire d'une pseudo-religion* (Paris, 1921), p. 9, in which the author, distinguishing between genuine Theosophy and the so-called "Société Théosophique" of Madame Blavatsky, concludes that "on doit rejeter comme chimériques les affirmations qui tendent à présenter cette Société comme la continuatrice d'autres associations..."

In the same work (p. 335), Guénon has stated: "Les ouvrages de M. Edouard Schuré sont, ... avec ceux de M. Maeterlinck, ceux qui, dans le domaine littéraire, ont contribué à amener le plus d'adhérents au théosophisme."

176. Edouard Schuré, *Les Grands Initiés: Esquisse de l'histoire secrète des religions* (Paris: Perrin, 1889), p. xxviii.

177. *Ibid*., pp. xxvi-xxvii. Schuré gives no source for this passage of Amiel, which is probably from the *Journal Intime*. Although Amiel was a Hegelian thinker, Schuré adds, "le jour où il écrivit ces lignes inspirées, il fut profondément théosophe."

178. Guy Michaud, *Message Poétique du Symbolisme* (Paris, 1947), p. 375.

In tracing the historical development of Symbolism in

French poetry, Michaud bases much of his analysis on the work of René Guénon. Seeming to paraphrase from *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, Michaud writes: "Le symbole est plus qu'un carrefour: c'est un rayonnement. C'est plus qu'une position privilégiée: c'est un centre dynamique d'où la vérité se répand, dans tous les sens, et sur tous les plans de la réalité. A ce prix seul, le mot symbole peut retrouver sa force et sa valeur véritable; à ce prix seul il sera ce que veulent les Symbolistes: une *synthèse*." (On the same page --414-- Michaud cites *Le Symbolisme de la Croix* in a footnote.) Perhaps unwittingly, Michaud does not give Guénon credit for the following remark, taken almost verbatim from *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*. Compare Michaud (p. 415): "Ce sont ces sens multiples et hiérarchiquement superposés qui font du symbolisme le langage initiatique par excellence." And Guénon (*Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, pp. 52-53): "Ces sens symboliques multiples et hiérarchiquement superposés ne s'excluent nullement les uns les autres.... C'est le langage initiatique par excellence."

179. Lucien Roure, *La Légende des "Grands Initiés"* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1926), pp. 13-14.

180. Guy Michaud, *La Révolution poétique* (Paris: Nizet, 1947), p. 371. In the first of his three-volume study of Symbolism, *L'Aventure Poétique* (pp. 222-225), Michaud writes that "jamais les doctrines ésotériques n'avaient été complètement délaissées," tracing these doctrines back to Swedenborg and Boehme.

181. Guy Michaud, *La Doctrine Symboliste* (Paris: Nizet, 1947), p. 25.

182. René Ghil, *Traîté du Verbe* (Paris, 1887), pp. 32-33; in Michaud, *La Doctrine Symboliste*, p. 56.

183. Charles Morice, *La Littérature de tout à l'Heure* (Paris, 1889), p. 355; in Michaud, *La Doctrine Symboliste*, p. 42.

184. Mallarmé, "Les Fenêtres." In a letter to Mallarmé, 18 April, 1891, Valéry wrote: "La poésie m'apparaît comme une explication du Monde délicate et belle, contenue dans une musique singulière et continuelle. Tandis que l'art métaphysique voit l'Univers construit d'idées pures et absolues, la peinture, de couleurs, l'art poétique sera de le considérer vêtu de syllabes, organisé en phrases." Cited in Michaud, *La Doctrine Symboliste*, p. 58.

185. Jacques Scherer, *L'Expression littéraire dans l'oeuvre de Stéphane Mallarmé* (Paris, 1947), pp. 156, 161-162.

186. Anne Osmont, Le Mouvement symboliste (Paris: Maison du Livre, 1917), p. 33; in Mercier, p. 127.

187. Matila Ghyka, Sortilèges du Verbe (Paris, 1949), p. 180.

188. *Ibid*., p. 178.

189. Victor-Emile Michelet, Les Compagnons de la Hiérophanie, p. 67.

190. Richard Knowles, Victor-Emile Michelet, poète ésotérique (Paris: Vrin, 1954), p. x.

191. *Ibid*., p. xi.

192. V.-E. Michelet, Les Compagnons de la Hiérophanie, pp. 66-67.

193. Guy Michaud, Message poétique du Symbolisme (Paris, 1947), p. 391.

194. V.-E. Michelet, De l'Esotérisme dans l'Art (Paris, 1891); in Michaud, La Doctrine Symboliste (Paris, 1947), p. 16.

195. Olympiodorus, Commentaire sur le Phédon, trans. Chamuel (Paris, 1891); in Knowles, p. 36.

196. Stanislas de Guaïta, Rosa Mystica (Paris, 1885), p. 6.

197. *Ibid*., p. 12.

198. *Ibid*., pp. 65-66.

199. Victor-Emile Michelet, Les Compagnons de la Hiérophanie (Paris: Dorbon, 1937), pp. 15-16.

200. *Ibid*., p. 19.

201. Stanislas de Guaïta, Essais de Sciences Maudites (Paris, 1891-1897), I, 169; in Knowles, p. 36. ✓

202. *Ibid*.

203. Joséphin Péladan, "Introduction aux Sciences Occultes," La Grande Revue, May, 1902; in Knowles, p. 36.

204. Victor-Emile Michelet, "Le Merveilleux," Revue de Famille, 18 September, 1890; in Knowles, pp. 39-40.

205. Knowles, p. 50.

206. See Georges Vitoux, Les Coulisses de l'Au-Delà (Paris: Chamuel, 1901), chapter on "La Guerre des Deux Roses."

207. V.-E. Michelet, Les Compagnons de la Hiérophanie, p. 23.

208. *Ibid*., p. 60.

209. Maurice Barrès, Amori et Dolori Sacrum (Paris: Plon, 1903), p. 138; in Knowles, p. 49.

210. Papus, "L'OEuvre de Réalisation de Stanislas de Guaïta," L'Initiation, January, 1898.

211. V.-E. Michelet, Les Compagnons de la Hiérophanie, p. 35.

212. Psyché, November 1, 1891.

CHAPTER TWO: PART ONE

RENE GUENON

René-Jean-Marie-Joseph Guénon was born in Blois on November 15, 1886, of Catholic parents. He was of fragile health, which was to hamper him in future years when he sought an advanced degree in mathematics. He grew to be familiar with and to love numbers, most probably under the guidance of his father, Jean-Baptiste, who was expert in geometry and an architect.

In October, 1898, just twelve years old, he was enrolled at the school of Notre-Dame des Aydes, and proved to be a superior student. He stayed there until November, 1901, when he left after a curious incident related by the Reverend E. Boitard a half century later in a letter to Chacornac. Boitard states that Guénon was a brilliant student, always first in his class. Unfortunately, he was once placed second in an exercise in French composition. His father immediately complained to the professor, who suggested to him (and this was unheard of) that he read both compositions; if Guénon's father decided that the exercise rated first was better than his son's, the professor would place his son last, and vice versa. "Le père fut obligé de reconnaître que le premier méritait vraiment la première place. Alors le professeur classa René Guénon le dernier, et le père vexé mit son fils au collège Augustin-Thierry."[1]

In a few months time, Guénon proved once again that he was a brilliant student. Among many prizes, he was to obtain one in Latin and one in Physics. Receiving his baccalaureate in 1902, he became Bachelor of Philosophy with honors in July, 1903, and was awarded a medal by the Alumni Association for distinguished work in mathematics in 1904.

Urged to follow up his studies in advanced mathematics, Guénon moved to Paris and enrolled in the Collège Rollin. His unusually fragile constitution, however, did not permit him to attend classes regularly. It was this discouragement, coupled with a growing curiosity about the then-popular mystic-occultist movement, that led him to the discovery of the Hermetic School and its director, Gérard Encausse, better known by his pseudonym, Dr. Papus. Enrolling in this society, at 13 rue séguier, Guénon made the acquaintance of Barlet, Sédir, Phaneg, and a genuine, if much-diluted, tradition of esoteric thought with which he was to familiarize himself most intimately in his later works.

Guénon's membership in the school of Papus, a Martinist

Order, was short-lived. The Order, according to its founder, Martinès de Pasqually, was, wrote Papus, "une Chevalerie Chrétienne respectant la liberté intellectuelle et morale de tous ses membres et donnant à ceux-ci une instruction élevée sur le symbolisme, l'illuminisme et leurs adaptations."[2]

Guénon learned that the Order had been a sort of "front" for a secret society known as the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor. "Entré dans l'Ordre Martiniste, après avoir satisfait aux deux premiers degrés," writes Chacornac, "il reçut le troisième, c'est-à-dire devint S∴ I∴ (Supérieur Inconnu), par Phaneg. Il prit alors connaissance des cahiers de l'Ordre pour être lui-même initiateur et par la suite fut pourvu d'une charte de délégué général pour le Loir-et-Cher."[3] In this capacity, and as executive secretary, Guénon was present at the Spiritualist and Masonic Congress held in Paris in June, 1908. It was during the proceedings at that Congress that Papus made a pronouncement which was the deciding factor in Guénon's resolution to leave the Order, and widened the schism that developed between him and the occultists. "Les sociétés futures," Papus said, "seront transformées par la certitude de deux vérités fondamentales du spiritualisme: la survivance et la réincarnation."[4] These "fundamental truths", Guénon surmised, were false adaptations of Martinist teachings, and would give the lie to the Hermetic tradition, which holds survivance to be spiritually inadequate, and *réincarnation* to be metaphysically impossible.[5]

Guénon's reaction here is perhaps the first important indication of a way of life he was to embrace in his later years: no mysterious insights, no so-called "spiritualist initiation" can possibly replace the results of carefully documented thought. Although he was a member of such secret societies as the Martinist Order, the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, the *Temple du Rite mixte du Droit Humain*, the *Rite de Memphis-Misraïm*, and the *Loge Humanidad*, Guénon soon cut most ties with the so-called "initiatic" movements of his day.

We find, in the February and March, 1909, issues of their review, *L'Initiation*, two secretarial minutes of meetings signed *R.G., S.∴ I.∴* . The minutes contain a detailed listing of the spiritualist fare for the month, brought to the attention of interested persons, and including the following entry for Saturday, March 20, 1909: "*Cours d'Hermétisme*. Teder, E.H. - Aperçu exotérique sur l'Agent universel et de la transmutation, et étude ésotérique de cette théorie."[6] Noting, as usual, that the courses of the Hermetic School would take place at half past eight p.m., Guénon's minutes for March were his last. Writing in *La Gnose* that year, Guénon expresses himself clearly on his brief but intense association with the spiritualist movement:

> Il est impossible d'associer des doctrines aussi dissemblables que le sont toutes celles que l'on range sous le nom de spiritualisme; de tels éléments ne pourront jamais constituer un édifice stable. Le tort de la plupart de ces doctrines soi-disant spiritualistes, c'est de n'être que du matérialisme transposé sur un autre plan, et de vouloir appliquer au domaine de l'esprit les méthodes que la science ordinaire emploie pour étudier le monde hylique. Ces méthodes expérimentales ne feront jamais connaître autre chose que de simples phénomènes, sur lesquels il est impossible d'édifier une théorie métaphysique quelconque, car un principe universel ne peut pas s'inférer de faits particuliers. D'ailleurs, la prétention d'acquérir la connaissance du monde spirituel par des moyens matériels est évidemment absurde; cette connaissance, c'est en nous-même seulement que nous pouvons en trouver les principes, et non pas dans des sujets extérieurs. 7

Guénon was to hold, throughout his life, that particular facts can never produce universal principles. Thus the occultist-spiritualist organizations, according to him, lead their members toward a false and incoherent spiritualism, a spiritualism without traditional basis--the word "tradition" taken of course in the context of what Guénon understood by "la Tradition primordiale"--the unity of thought and action which, transcending the arbitrary rule of culture and society, serves as the one common denominator between men and leads them to an awareness of Unity, supreme and indivisible.

Consecrated a bishop in the Gnostic Church in 1909 by Synésius (Fabre des Essarts), Guénon was named Palingénius, "...dont la première partie tirée du grec, signifie qui renaît, l'équivalent de son prénom: René."[8] H.C. Puech has defined

Gnosticism as follows: "on appelle gnosticisme -- et aussi gnose -- toute doctrine ou toute attitude religieuse fondée sur la théorie ou sur l'expérience de l'obtention du Salut par la connaissance."[9] It is as a direct application of this definition that Guénon speaks firmly and positively of "la voie initiatique" in his discussions, and not of "la voie mystique". "Dans la première," Méroz writes in a study of Guénon, "les progrès acquis le sont définitivement sans retour en arrière possible... tandis que les mystiques seraient 'passivement' soumis à l'action de la grâce et toujours susceptibles d'une 'rechute'."[10]

During his service in the Gnostic Church, Guénon met two men who were to influence him considerably in his later decision to convert to Islam: Léon Champrenaud, who eventually took the name of Abdul Haqq (the Servant of Truth) and became a Muslim, and Albert de Pouvourville, who during a sojourn in Tonkin, was initiated into the Taoist faith and took the name Matgioï (The Sun). Both men published extensively in La Gnose, the Order's mouthpiece, whose editor Guénon became in 1909. The two friends shared Guénon's critical attitude toward occultist fads, and sought an underlying unity of thought which would serve as the one base of all esoteric study, tying in Orient and Occident and providing each with access to the other.

Where the various occultist movements seemed obsessed with a need to be private and separate from others, the philosophia perennis, or Primordial Tradition, whose language Guénon and his friends were looking for was a unifying, self-explanatory revelation of man's wholeness. Guénon, Champrenaud, and Pouvourville saw the Gnostic movement as a possible way to discover the Primordial Tradition. In his search for a modus operandi of the Gnostic movement, Guénon published the following in La Gnose:

> La Gnose doit ... écarter ces doctrines et ne s'appuyer que sur la Tradition orthodoxe contenue dans les Livres sacrés de tous les peuples, Tradition qui, en réalité, est partout la même, malgré les formes diverses qu'elle revêt pour s'adapter à chaque race et à chaque époque. Mais ici encore il faut avoir bien soin de distinguer cette Tradition véritable de toutes les interprétations érronées et de tous les commentaires fantaisistes qui en ont été donnés de nos jours par une foule d'écoles plus ou moins occultistes, qui ont malheureusement voulu parler trop souvent de ce qu'elles ignoraient. 11

The self-discipline he imposes here and in the works which he outlined first in La Gnose[12] is a measure of the problems he encountered in his attempts to define the means by which the Order would discover, comprehend, and apply the tenets of the Primordial Tradition.

A regular contributor to the review La France Anti-Maçonnique (July, 1913 to July, 1914), Guénon published a series of articles under the pseudonym of "Le Sphinx", on various occult societies and their influence at the time.

One line bears noting in particular--it foreshadows a theme which will recur in many of his later works: "Si la Religion est nécessairement une comme la Vérité, les religions ne peuvent être que des déviations de la Doctrine primordiale."[13] He thus becomes a spokesman and defender of all orthodox religions considered by him to be adaptations of the Primordial Tradition.

It is becoming increasingly clear that Guénon--well before his sojourns in North Africa and Egypt--discovered Islamic esoterism by defining the fundamental aspects of a doctrine to which he remained faithful until his death. In his biography, Paul Sérant states that "...il apparaît à peu près certain qu'il a rencontré dès l'âge de vingt-trois ans les représentants des doctrines islamique, hindoue, et chinoise desquels il a reçu les éléments nécessaires à l'élaboration de sa synthèse traditionnelle."[14]

Evidence of Guénon's interest in Islamic esoterism is the dedication of his Symbolisme de la Croix, dated 1329 on the Hegira scale (1912 AD): "To the venerated memory of Esh-Sheikh Abder-Rahman Elish el-Kebir." The Muslim sage was one of the foremost proponents of Sufism, and accepted Guénon as his pupil in 1912, preparing him for initiation into the Sufi sect later that year, under Guénon's chosen name of Abdel-Wahed Yahya (Servant of the Living One).

In 1916, Guénon met Noële Maurice-Denis Boulet while enrolled in a course in philosophy given at the Sorbonne by Milhaud. Writing in La Pensée Catholique in 1962, Noële Maurice-Denis Boulet recalls that meeting in detail. "C'est chez Milhaud qu'un jeune homme d'une trentaine d'années, très long et très mince, avec des petits yeux noirs fixes et pénétrants, lut un jour un étonnant mémoire sur la 'Métaphysique', avec un air fort modeste, timide même, audacieux cependant par sa profonde assurance et son mépris absolu des modernes en ce milieu hostile."[15] The piece in question, published ten years later, was titled La Métaphysique orientale, and contains the essence of Guénon's doctrine concerning traditional esoterism.

The friendship between these two "sorbonnards" developed quickly, and lasted until 1924, when Guénon's correspondence with his friend ends--perhaps due to fundamental intellectual divergences, but more likely due to the circumstances which lead up to Guénon's definitive departure for Egypt. Noële Boulet has observed that, as early as 1916, Guénon's doctrine "était déjà constituée pour l'essentiel dans son aspect critique et dans son aspect constructif."[16] As is clear in Guénon's piece on Oriental metaphysics, the East was his principal source of traditional thought. In 1924, he affirmed that his most important ideas had been provided through Oriental thought. "C'est là une vérité de fait," he wrote; "cela importe moins que de comprendre ces idées et de reconnaître qu'elles sont vraies en soi; et, si elles nous étaient venues d'ailleurs, nous n'y verrions point une raison de les écarter a priori, mais, puisque nous n'avons trouvé nulle part en Occident l'équivalent de ces idées orientales, nous estimons qu'il convient de le dire."[17]

The single overriding aim of Guénon's work, as is made clear in his correspondence with his friend Noële Boulet, is the restoration of the "traditional spirit" in the Occident. This restoration presupposes a certain initiatic process, which involves a profound knowledge of Christianity. Guénon was convinced that knowledge, true knowledge, could never be merely theoretical or speculative, but implies "la réception de l'initiation virtuelle par un rite se superposant aux rites exotériques auxquels participent tous les fidèles."[18] Thus an exoterism is indispensable to true initiation.

Noële Boulet notes that Guénon "converted" to Islam in 1912, having received "l'initiation au çoufisme, et cela l'année même de son mariage avec la bonne Berthe." Of Guénon's first wife, Berthe Loury, from Blois, Noële Boulet has written: "Je suis convaincue que Mme Guénon ignora toujours cette initiation musulmane, inconciliable, de par le droit canonique, avec un mariage chrétien. Telle que je la connus, tel qu'était son milieu de famille, elle n'aurait jamais accepté d'épouser Guénon, si elle eût su qu'il était musulman."[19] Two years previously, Guénon had met Ivan-Gustave Agueli, a Finnish artist and philologist who, taking the name Abdul-Hâdi, had converted to Islam, and was the first to translate into French the tract on the "Supreme Identity" written by the Arab philosopher Mohyiddin Ibn-Arabi.[20] Lucien Méroz, in his study of the initiatic elements in Guénon's work, wrote about Guénon's confirmation into Sufism in 1912: "Le rattachement islamique de 1912 est un rattachement à l'ésotérisme et non à l'exotérisme de l'Islam. Il en est de même, d'une certaine façon, pour la Franc-Maçonnerie dont Guénon ne retenait que ce qui pouvait subsister des anciennes formes initiatiques..."[21]

In 1916, Guénon was living at 51 rue Saint-Louis-en-l'Ile, with his wife Berthe, and an aunt, Madame Duru. A close friend of Guénon's at the time was Pierre Germain, "un petit homme blond, contrefait, aux beaux yeux bleus d'idéaliste et à la plume étonnamment facile..."[22] Germain, who died at thirty-four in 1922, is mentioned frequently in the Boulet correspondence. Of the three friends, Noële writes that her father "faisait ma caricature entre le grand Guénon et le petit Germain."[23]

In 1917, Guénon was appointed instructor in philosophy at Sétif, Algeria. Writing to his friend Noële Boulet from Sétif, Guénon gives a detailed account of his teaching activities. Along with classes in philosophy, Guénon taught French to students of the _première_ class, as well as Latin to students of the top two forms, all of which, he writes, "ne m'amuse pas du tout, je vous assure, d'autant plus que les élèves sont en général d'une nullité extraordinaire, surtout en latin."[24]

Berthe Guénon wrote Noële Boulet from Sétif on January 4, 1918, in reply to her friend's request for information about the small town where her husband René was teaching. The letter is a pleasant guide to Sétif's history, architecture, and scenic attractions, although Berthe's objective observations of its inhabitants are sometimes marred by her conclusions. "Le costume arabe fait nos délices, quand il est propre," she writes; "malheureusement, cette qualité est rare chez nos sujets. Quel dommage! C'est enlever tout charme et toute grâce au burnous de le voir flotter sale et en guenilles sur des êtres aussi malpropres que leur costume."

Guénon's feelings about his brief sojourn in North Africa are summed up in a letter to Noële Boulet, in which he writes: "En général, les gens d'ici ne s'occupent guère que de commerce et d'affaires; tout le reste semble les laisser indifférents...."[25] Yet the academic world in Paris did not seem to provide a meaningful solution to the intellectual wasteland of which Guénon complained. "Ce n'est pas dans les milieux universitaires," he wrote to his friend, "que je compte trouver jamais la moindre compréhension des choses métaphysiques."[26]

On his return to Blois from Algeria, Guénon wrote to

Noële Boulet on December 8, 1918, to bring his friend up to date on his activities: "En temps normal, j'ai beaucoup moins à faire ici qu'à Sétif; j'espère donc avoir la possibilité de travailler un peu pour moi, ce qui me serait d'autant plus nécessaire que j'ai l'intention d'essayer l'agrégation à la fin de l'année..." Guénon notes an article by Noële's father, the artist Maurice Denis, in the Revue des Jeunes of December, 1918, in which the artist writes on the distinctions between symbol and allegory. "Bien que je ne sois pas très compétent pour les choses artistiques," Guénon comments, "...j'ai toujours fait la différence, mais sans trouver le moyen de l'exprimer bien nettement."[27]

On his return to Blois in the latter part of 1918, Guénon finds his work in France "préférable à celle de l'année dernière à bien des égards..." Yet teaching seems to be antithetical to his desired intellectual pursuits: "Il faudrait pour cela n'avoir pas la fatigue de la classe," he wrote to Noële on December 19, "ni toutes les préoccupations qui s'y rattachent; je finis par croire que l'enseignement, du moins l'enseignement secondaire, est tout à fait incompatible avec certains travaux personnels."

Guénon left Blois on July 2, 1919, to sit for his exams for the agrégation in Paris. On July 30, 1919, Guénon knew he had passed the first set of exams in philosophy; he had written on each of the following subjects: 1) The role of intuition in knowledge; 2) Realism in art; 3) Ideas and types in the philosophy of Plato.[28] "Il va maintenant falloir passer l'oral..." he writes, adding, "je commence à avoir vraiment besoin de me reposer, et même de ne plus penser à rien pendant quelque temps si cela était possible." The much-needed rest was slow in coming, however, for Guénon's letter of September 8, 1919 informed his friend Noële that he had failed his orals: "J'ai eu la malchance d'avoir pour ma leçon un sujet de morale (l'idée de sacrifice) qui ne m'intéressait nullement." Guénon's lack of interest in the subject chosen for him was not, however, the reason behind his failure. He states that he had done an honorable job, but that of the fourteen candidates, for whom fourteen openings in the profession were available, only five of the youngest candidates were passed. "Il est vrai que, si j'avais eu un sujet de leçon convenant mieux à mes aptitudes, le résultat aurait probablement été le même, étant donné la mentalité du jury. D'ailleurs, Lévy-Brühl lui-même m'avait dit que ce concours était fait surtout pour des candidats beaucoup plus jeunes, ce que les résultats confirment tout à fait." (Guénon was thirty-three at the time.)[29]

Guénon's conclusions from this experience are not bitter ones. "Vous savez que je n'ai jamais eu grande estime pour les examens et concours en général," he wrote to Noële, adding that he would sit for the exams a second time although he would not prepare any further, "car j'aime mieux consacrer mon temps à des travaux plus intéressants, auxquels je compte bien me remettre dès que j'aurai pris un peu de repos."

Setting little hope in his exams, and wishing to devote his time more fully to his personal work, Guénon decided in early 1920 to take private students in philosophy, in order to augment his small income.[30] On a few occasions, he mentions preparing a doctoral thesis, and his observations are ironic in retrospect, and bear noting at length: "...je ne veux à aucun prix faire un gros volume sur une simple question de détail, plus ou moins insignifiante, ce qui est le cas de la plupart des thèses. En somme, il s'agit pour moi de faire autre chose qu'un travail d'érudition, quelque chose qui ait vraiment une portée métaphysique...."[31] Elsewhere, objecting to a suggestion of his friend, he writes: "Je ne crois pas que le mieux soit de commencer par une thèse de doctorat, pour laquelle le plus difficile sera de faire accepter le sujet (je ne veux pas me laisser imposer une simple question de détail), aussi bien que la façon de le traiter; ce que je crains le plus, c'est de me trouver en face de gens qui se déclarent incompétents."[32]

A letter to Noële on February 10, 1920, mentions an infirmity which brings to mind Guénon's premature death, in 1951, of poor health complicated by a disease of the legs: "ayant mal au pied," he writes, "j'évite de marcher autant que cela n'est pas absolument indispensable."

Writing from Blois in March, 1919, Guénon replies to his friend's request to note and examine some of the ideas in Guénon's work in her thesis in philosophy. Guénon is to note, however, that the ideas in question are "d'ailleurs miennes que dans l'expression, non en elles-mêmes. Il n'y a que les philosophes modernes, faiseurs de systèmes, qui, avec leur absurde prétention à l'originalité avant tout, puissent s'imaginer que les idées sont la propriété de quelqu'un; et en fait, pour ce que sont leurs idées, cela n'a pas une bien grande importance."[33]

In July, 1920, on the recommendation of his friend Lévy-Brühl, Guénon submitted the manuscript of his work on Hindu doctrine to the publisher Rivière, "qui n'a pas refusé en principe, et à qui le sujet semble même plaire."[34] On August 3, 1920, Guénon announces to his friend Noële the happy news that his book will be published: "Rivière accepte de l'éditer à ses frais, et il m'a promis de le faire paraître avant la fin de l'année." It was thanks, in some measure, to the favorable recommendation of Maritain.[35] Father Peillaube, an editor of the Revue de Philosophie in the early 20's, also gave his approval of Guénon's work, inviting him to write some articles for the journal.[36] Guénon sets the tone of the proposed short works in a letter to Noële, September 17, 1920: "Cela me va tout à fait de faire quelque chose contre la théosophie."[37]

In November, 1920, thanks in large part to his friendship with Father Peillaube, Guénon was able to convince Rivière to print his doctoral thesis. "D'autre part, tout est réglé du côté de la Sorbonne; j'ai enfin pu rencontrer Sylvain Lévi, qui m'a donné son approbation écrite; le doyen a accordé immédiatement son autorisation...."[38] Sylvain Lévi seems to have withdrawn his support, however. Noële Boulet writes that "en mars 1921, un rapport négatif de Sylvain Lévi mettait fin à l'espoir de Guénon de devenir docteur-ès-lettres avec l'Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues."[39]

In late 1921, Guénon asked his friend to prepare a review of his work on Hindu doctrine for the Revue Universelle.[40] In his next letter (January 3, 1922), Guénon informs Noële that others have taken an interest in his work: "Vous savez peut-être que, pour 'l'Action Française', Daudet a l'intention de faire un article dans lequel il parlera de mes deux ouvrages en même temps."

Asked by Guénon to write a review of his work on Hindu doctrine, Noële Boulet worked with Maritain in preparing an article for the Revue Universelle of July 15, 1921. Mme Boulet writes that Maritain "désirait me voir 'indiquer dans un paragraphe spécial que la métaphysique de Guénon est radicalement inconciliable avec la foi...' Pour finir, il rédigea lui-même la dernière phrase servant de conclusion, tout en me laissant libre de la modifier sur épreuves, ce que je ne fis pas. Si je raconte ce détail, ce n'est pas seulement pour partager avec Jacques Maritain la responsabilité du vif mécontentement de Guénon qui suivit (car il ne concernait pas seulement cette conclusion),[41] mais pour montrer combien, en des matières si délicates, il y a lieu d'être prudents. Notre ami, à la vérité, se montra fort susceptible: au public de La Revue universelle on ne pouvait, de toutes facons, présenter son hindouisme comme la vérité pure..."[42] It would seem that such fundamental doctrinal divergences would inevitably lead to a rift between the three school friends. Such, indeed, was the case, for Guénon's letter of July 28, 1921, was the penultimate one he addressed to Mme Boulet on matters of research and doctrine. His letter of August 14, 1921, Mme Boulet writes, "fut la dernière, me semble-t-il, que je reçus de René Guénon sur les problèmes métaphysiques. Nous étions certes reconciliés. Mais il avait perdu tout espoir de m'initier de maître à disciple. D'ailleurs ce fut, le 2 novembre suivant, la mort subite de Pierre Germain et, deux mois après, mon mariage, événements qui supprimèrent en fait nos échanges."[43]

In May, 1922, Guénon announces to Noële Boulet: "Mon travail sur le spiritisme est terminé."[44] A year and a half later, following L'Erreur Spirite, Guénon writes to his friend that "mon volume 'Orient et Occident' n'est pas encore paru, et pourtant, si tout avait marché normalement, il aurait dû être prêt en juin."[45] And again, just a few months later, he writes: "Je prépare actuellement un autre travail sur les doctrines hindoues."[46]

Chacornac gives the account of a meeting organized by Frédéric Lefèvre in 1924 between the Polish anthropologist Ferdinand Ossendowski (author of Bêtes, Hommes et Dieux), the orientalist René Grousset, Jacques Maritain and Guénon.[47] Lefèvre, editor of Les Nouvelles Littéraires, began by asking Ossendowski what he could tell about his attempts to find the "Roi du Monde" mentioned in his work--a symbolic figure to which Guénon later devoted a work by the same title. The conference then turned to an opinion given by Guénon as to what the assembled intellectuals thought about the feasibility of "...une alliance ou une entente possible entre l'Orient et l'Occident." Grousset maintained that "les Anglo-Saxons avaient compris depuis longtemps que cette compénétration était inéluctable et qu'il était vain de s'y opposer." Maritain, taking a different view, answered that "...si l'on devait étudier l'Orient avec attention et sympathie, on devait maintenir sans fléchir le dépôt héllenique, latin et catholique." Guénon's contribution to the discussion was that "dans l'Orient, il y a une sagesse profonde que l'Occident ne sait pas apercevoir," and that "l'Orient possède une vérité qui peut s'accorder avec la vérité des plus hautes traditions occidentales, la tradition aristotélicienne et la tradition catholique."[48]

Paul Chacornac, who met Guénon in 1922 and became his publisher, had the following remark about Guénon's efforts to present an intellectual "entente" between Orient and Occident: "Tandis que certains ne voyaient de salut pour l'Occident -- dans l'ordre intellectuel -- que dans un retour au Catholicisme et spécialement à la théologie thomiste, d'autres préconisaient un appel aux doctrines philosophiques de l'Orient dont ils se faisaient, d'ailleurs, une idée plus ou moins exacte."[49] The result of this was numerous polemics on the question of whether Oriental religion, philosophy and esthetics could exercise an appreciable influence upon the Occident, and whether this influence would be useful or harmful to both civilizations. The Cahiers du Mois (1922-1924) published articles furiously espousing both points of view, going so far as to publish a volume entitled Les Appels de l'Orient. It was in this intellectual atmosphere that Guénon published, first the somewhat negative L'Erreur Spirite (1923) and then Orient et Occident (1924). Fully aware of the distance which separates Orient and Occident (it is interesting to note that, while Guénon says "Orient", he finds it necessary to qualify the latter by calling it "l'Occident moderne"), the author believes a "rapprochement" between the two is not only desirable, but possible. The necessary and sufficient condition for this "entente", according to Guénon, resides in "...l'abandon par l'Occident des idéologies de divers ordres qui ont, depuis le XVIe siècle, contribué à la formation de la mentalité moderne et ruiné les bases traditionnelles sur lesquelles reposait la Chrétienté médievale."[50]

The first part of the work is devoted to a carefully documented expose of what Guénon calls "les illusions occidentales", and of the nefarious influence of the idols of modern Occidentals: progress and science. The second part is an outline of the possibilities of a "rapprochement" between the two, which are summed up for the moment in the following observation by Guénon's publisher, Chacornac. It is, he says, "un accord sur les principes d'une métaphysique authentique encore conservée en Orient et par la reconstitution d'une élite intellectuelle occidentale qui reprendrait conscience de la valeur du sens profond de sa tradition --le Christianisme-- par une étude des doctrines orientales puisées aux sources mêmes et non dans les travaux des orientalistes."[51] As we shall see later, Guénon was extremely reluctant to turn to professional (academic) orientalists, whom he considered dabblers unfit to transmit truly and properly the essence of any civilization other than their own.

During the years 1921-1927, Guénon was interested in several contemporary politico-cultural movements which he eventually rejected as being too exclusive or too reactionary or both. His anti-modernism, for example, found an outlet in the then-budding Action Française, and L'Homme et son devenir selon le Védanta (published in 1925) contains a brief hommage to Léon Daudet, who wrote with unstinting praise about Guénon's work in the Society's official mouthpiece. The following is excerpted from an article published by Daudet in L'Action Française, and points up quite clearly the slanted, partisan interpretation of Orient et Occident:

> N'attendez pas de moi une analyse critique d'Orient et Occident, qui est, lui-même, un ouvrage critique, je le répète, d'une exceptionnelle pénétration et où abondent les horizons nouveaux. La constatation double que fait M. Guénon, et que tout homme attentif et cultivé peut faire avec lui, doit être ainsi résumée:
>
> 1. L'Occident est placé, depuis les Encyclopédistes et au-delà, depuis la Réforme, dans un état d'anarchie intellectuelle qui est une véritable barbarie.
>
> 2. La civilisation, dont il est si fier, repose sur un ensemble de perfectionnements matériels et industriels --qui multiplient les chances de guerre et d'invasion-- sur un soubassement moral et intellectuel assez faible, sur un soubassement métaphysique nul.
>
> Par des voies différentes, j'étais arrivé à une conclusion analogue dans l'examen du stupide XIXe siècle: mais mon ignorance de la philosophie orientale --que possède à fond M. Guénon-- ne m'avait pas permis de dresser le redoutable parallèle qu'il nous expose. Il ressort, sans qu'il l'exprime d'une façon positive, que l'Occident est menacé, plus du dedans, je veux dire par sa débilité mentale, que du dehors, où cependant sa situation n'est pas si sûre. 52

In 1925, Guénon met the French archeologist and Christian symbolist Louis Charbonneau-Lassay, the author of Le Bestiaire du Christ. Guénon helped him publish numerous articles on Christian symbolism with the idea that they would help Occidentals to be more aware of their tradition, and of its place in the Primordial Tradition. One article, published in Etudes Traditionnelles, had the following introductory note by Guénon: "Cet article, qui avait été écrit autrefois pour la revue Regnabit ... se place plus spécialement dans la perspective de la tradition chrétienne avec l'intention d'en montrer le parfait accord avec les autres formes de la tradition universelle."[53]

That same year (1925), Guénon delivered his only lecture "en conférence" at the Sorbonne--a short, concise paper that was not published until 1939. Titled La Métaphysique orientale, it was one hour long. Underlining the role of Aristotle and the scholastics in Occidental thought, Guénon makes the following statement, of which certain implications, according to Chacornac, "ne devaient être mises en lumière qu'un quart de siècle plus tard:"[54]

> Nous avons, pour notre part, la certitude qu'il y a eu autre chose que cela en Occident, dans l'antiquité et au moyen âge, qu'il y a eu, à l'usage d'une élite, des doctrines purement métaphysiques et que nous pouvons dire complètes y compris cette réalisation qui, pour la plupart des modernes est sans doute une chose à peine concevable; si l'Occident en a aussi totalement perdu le souvenir, c'est qu'il a rompu avec ses propres traditions, et c'est pourquoi la civilisation moderne est une civilisation anormale et déviée. 55

In his conference, delivered at the Sorbonne, December 17, 1925, Guénon had stressed that the word "métaphysique" is synonymous with "Tradition primordiale", "sciences traditionnelles", and "science sacrée". As such, the term must be taken in a universal sense, beyond all particularisation. He explained that he had added the word "oriental" to his title only to underline the fact that this "métaphysique" is generally absent in the Occident, while in the Orient, it is always the object of effective, integral knowledge:

> Pour ne considérer que les principales civilisations de l'Orient, l'équivalent de la métaphysique hindoue se trouve en Chine, dans le Taoisme; il se trouve aussi, d'un autre côté, dans certaines écoles ésotériques de l'Islam.... La seule différence, c'est que, partout ailleurs que dans l'Inde, ces doctrines sont réservées à une élite plus restreinte et plus fermée; c'est ce qui eut lieu aussi en Occident au moyen âge, pour un ésotérisme assez comparable à celui de l'Islam à bien des égards, et aussi purement métaphysique que celui-ci, mais dont les modernes, pour la plupart, ne soupçonnent même plus l'existence. Dans l'Inde, on ne peut parler d'ésotérisme au sens propre de ce mot, parce qu'on n'y trouve pas une doctrine à deux faces, exotérique et ésotérique; il ne peut être question que d'un ésotérisme naturel, en ce sens que chacun approfondira plus ou moins selon la mesure de ses propres possibilités intellectuelles, car il y a pour certaines individualités humaines, des limitations qui sont inhérentes à leur nature même et qu'il leur est impossible de franchir. 56

Commenting on the rather special place given to Hindu metaphysics by Guénon in his conference, Lucien Méroz notes, paraphrasing Guénon in L'Homme et son devenir selon le Védanta, that "L'Inde est ... le pays privilégié de la métaphysique puisqu'elle s'y est conservée si pure qu'il n'y a plus lieu d'envisager une distinction entre ésotérisme et exotérisme, c'est-à-dire entre deux aspects d'une même doctrine, l'un, plus intérieur et d'un ordre plus élevé réservé à des disciples réguliers et choisis, l'autre, plus extérieur, plus élémentaire et pouvant être plus largement mis à la portée de tous."[57]

Metaphysics, in this framework, are that part of philosophical thought which envisages being in terms of its principle, that is in an absolutely universal manner, and in the perspective that being may be perceived not only in the visible, but also in the spiritual sense. It is, in Guénon's words, "la connaissance de l'universel, ou, si l'on veut, des principes d'ordre universel."[58] In this definition, we find one of Guénon's most explicit divergences from Aristotelian metaphysics as interpreted by Aquinas.

Méroz sheds further light on this divergence between Guénon's vision of metaphysics and Thomism:

> On pourrait dire ... que, dans l'univers de saint Thomas, toute intelligence, même limitée par sa condition individuelle, peut contenir la perfection de l'univers entier, à sa façon, en pénétrant dans la nature même des choses pour s'identifier à leur essence. Dans l'univers de René Guénon, la limitation qui constitue la condition existentielle des choses est un obstacle à cette connaissance universelle et seul un être existentiellement infini, exempt de toute limitation, est capable d'une telle connaissance. 59

Thus man, in Guénon's vision, must be considered as being related to this limitless being, this atemporal and immutable "Soi". Metaphysical realisation, to constitute true knowledge, thus becomes a progressive discovery of the self, of its "Identité suprême" with the Principle of all being, the Absolute which must precede all physical manifestation.

It was this sentiment that led to the eventual publication, in 1927, of La Crise du monde moderne. In his Souvenirs et perspectives sur René Guénon, Gonzague Truc, one of his close friends, had the following anecdote, pointing to a possible first inspiration for this work: "Nous nous accordions tous deux, moi peut-être plus indiscrètement, lui avec une justesse ou une justice plus profonde et plus impitoyable dans l'exécration de ce "monde moderne" qui, avec un stupide orgueil, chaque jour avançait son ensevelissement, et où l'esprit semblait s'abîmer à jamais sous la matière et le nombre. Je lui disais: 'Faites quelque chose là-dessus.' Il fit cet ouvrage d'inspiration, très vite."[60]

Attempting to place the modern Occident in the perspective of human history, Guénon begins by explaining the Hindu theory of cosmic cycles: he shows that the characteristics of our times permit us to identify them as being part of the last period of the Kali-Yuga, or dark age--that is, at the very end of the great cycles (manvantaras) which have marked the development of humanity. Primordial spirituality, according to the Hindu doctrine, must pass through four stages or ages, which ancient Occidental tradition has named the ages of Gold, Silver, Bronze and Iron. The last--the Kali-Yuga in the Hindu version--is the one we have now embarked upon.

The cycles in the Hindu vision of the world are not progressions which take place geometrically and in a more or less consistent process: they do not proceed, in Guénon's words, "en une ligne droite, selon un sens unique et sans oscillation d'aucune sorte;" there are actually two directions to each cycle, one descending, the other ascending, both directions operating within the same cyclic process. Thus the "tendance ascendante" can sometimes exert a corrective, halting force to the plunging tendency, thus neutralizing the fall, or delaying its fatal consequences. Guénon does not believe all of humanity to be in the grip of the same tendency --in this case, the process (in the Kali-Yuga cycle) of degeneration. The Occidental world, because of its sensory and quantitative preoccupations, is, according to Guénon, by far the lower on the scale, and thus particularly susceptible to spiritual and moral bankruptcy. The Occident, he felt, has long accorded supremacy to action, holding it above knowledge; science has kept its profane character since the sixteenth century; individualism is sought after as an end in itself.

It is of utmost importance to this study to state that in no way did Guénon think of "Orientalizing" the Occident, to have Western Man imitate or follow any cultural paradigm foreign to his own traditional one, or to dilute his tradition in a mediocre form of syncretism. The Occident must seek within itself the means to a direct return to its own tradition by a spontaneous awakening of its latent possibilities. Occidentals might accomplish this work of restoration through a certain insight into Oriental doctrines, but it would still be the restoration of a tradition proper to the Occident: this constitutes one of the main objectives of Guénon's works.

Méroz has intimated that Guénon was never more of an Occidental than in his concern with logic and a systematic research leading to his conclusions.[61] While his vision of the Vêdantâ is certainly a valid one, Méroz points out, "elle exclut tout ce qui pourrait ressembler à un élan ou à une expérience mystique." Thus to Leibniz's famous question whether God created the best of all possible works, Guénon's answer would be that not only did He create it, but all possible worlds.[62] "La mystique, pour lui, souffre du défaut de ne pas dépasser le point de vue individuel, c'est-à-dire d'établir un 'je' réel en face d'un Absolu qui seul mérite le nom de réalité. Rien ne l'irritait plus qu'une explication de la spiritualité indienne par la 'mystique naturelle'."[63] Alain Daniélou is said to have submitted his works on the Vêdantâ to orthodox Indian pandits: "Le verdict de ceux-ci fut net," he says, "de tous les Occidentaux qui se sont occupés de doctrines hindoues, seul René Guénon, dirent-ils, en a vraiment compris le sens."[64]

Guénon's L'Homme et son devenir selon le Vêdantâ, published in 1925, deals in part with this same problem. His quest, as in La Crise du monde moderne and Orient et Occident, is for an Occidental elite "...ayant retrouvé à la fois, le sens profond de sa tradition et la notion de l'universalité traditionnelle."[65] Guénon is quite precise on one point: one of the most favorable conditions for the intellectual rebirth of the Occident would be that the élite he hopes for provide itself with "...un point d'appui dans une organisation occidentale ayant déjà une existence effective."[66] Then follows an elucidation of such an organization, and compelling evidence that Guénon was not preaching some form of spiritual syncretism:

> ...il semble bien qu'il n'y ait plus en Occident qu'une seule organisation qui possède un caractère traditionnel, et qui conserve une doctrine susceptible de fournir au travail dont il s'agit une base appropriée: c'est l'Eglise catholique. Il suffirait de restituer à la doctrine de celle-ci, sans rien changer à la forme religieuse sans laquelle elle se présente au dehors, le sens profond qu'elle a réellement en elle-même, mais dont ses représentants actuels paraissent n'avoir plus conscience, non plus que de son unité essentielle avec les autres formes traditionnelles; les deux choses d'ailleurs sont inséparables l'une de l'autre. Ce serait le Catholicisme au vrai sens de ce mot, qui, étymologiquement, exprime l'idée d'"universalité" ce qu'oublient un peu trop ceux qui voudraient

> n'en faire que la dénomination d'une forme spéciale et purement occidentale, sans aucun lien effectif avec les autres traditions. 67

La Crise du monde moderne was a success of sorts when it was published; at the very least, the right people liked it. Leopold Ziegler, German critic and author, said of it: "Ici, le temporel est enfin mesuré, compté et pesé avec des mesures éternelles, et trouvé trop léger."[68]

François Bonjean, an Islamist of note and a student of Guénon, at the time living on the rue Pasteur in Paris, organized meetings at his home on Fridays, for the purpose, according to him, of gathering "des personnes qui s'intéressaient aux rapports anciens, présents ou futurs de l'Orient et de l'Occident."[69] "A de rares exceptions," he goes on, "la compagnie se trouvait formée de Musulmans, d'Hindouistes, d'Israelites, de Chrétiens, qui n'avaient qu'une connaissance obscurcie de leur religion... ces jeunes et brillants orientaux étaient fortement occidentalisés."[70]

We are told that at this time (1927), Guénon's objectives were to understand Indian thought. His knowledge of Sanskrit and Hindu were certainly superior to his familiarity with classical Arabic. He knew Latin, Greek, Hebrew, as well as English, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian and Polish. "De cette façon," says Bonjean, "il pouvait aisément répondre à n'importe quel de ses interlocuteurs, dans leurs langues respectives."

> Je vois encore Guénon, grand, maigre, ruisselant de bonne foi, faire face à ses contradicteurs. Le spectacle de cet occidental défendant opiniâtrement le legs de l'Orient contre les orientaux enjoués, ne manquait ni de piquant ni de grandeur.
>
> Avec une patience inlassable, il s'efforcait de convaincre l'auditoire de l'existence en divers points de l'Orient, de centres habilités à conduire les disciples dans les voies difficiles, parfois dangereuses, de la "purification", et à leur transmettre graduellement, et au fur et à mesure, de la maîtrise, ainsi acquise sur les énergies sauvages du "psychisme" cette vérité qui, communiquée à l'indigne, cesse d'être la vérité. 71

La Crise du monde moderne was also inspired in part by Guénon's indignant reaction to La Défense de l'Occident, of Henri Massis, published in 1926. In a letter of great doctrinal significance, written to Noële Boulet on September 13, 1917, Guénon outlines the single most fundamental reason for the rift which developed between him and Massis, whose Défense de l'Occident could not possibly agree with Guénon's ideas on the subject of tradition: "Il ne faut jamais oublier qu'il n'y a en Occident, présentement tout au moins, aucune tradition qui ait un caractère purement métaphysique, ni d'ailleurs qui soit métaphysiquement complète; le premier de ces deux défauts paraît surtout imputable à l'héritage de la mentalité judaïque, le second à celui de la mentalité grecque. Si je dis 'présentement', c'est que nous pourrions peut-être envisager les choses autrement s'il nous était possible de mieux connaître tout ce qui a existé au moyen âge, et dont, malheureusement, la prétendue Renaissance n'a rien laissé subsister;

Je ne doute pas qu'il n'y ait eu alors un enseignement traditionnel beaucoup moins extérieur que ce que contiennent tous les écrits qui nous sont parvenus."

Berthe Guénon died in 1927, of complications resulting from acute appendicitis. In her souvenirs of Guénon, Noële Boulet notes that Berthe had no children of her own. "Elle avait adopté, au retour de Sétif, une de ses nièces, Françoise, qui, après la mort des deux femmes [Berthe and her aunt, Mme Duru, who died in 1928], quitta son oncle qui l'avait élevée de 4 a 14 ans (1918-1928). Françoise devait plus tard entrer en religion, chez les Srs de la Ste Famille."[72]

In 1928, Guénon became a regular contributor to the review Le Voile d'Isis, edited by Chacornac, and, in 1933, changing its name to Etudes Traditionnelles. In the same year, he published Autorité Spirituelle et pouvoir temporel, which is an indispensable complement to Orient et Occident, in the sense that any possible return of the Occident to its rightful traditional roots must imply a "prise de conscience" of a necessarily harmonious relationship between the spiritual and the temporal. Guénon explained it this way:

> Tant qu'il subsistera une autorité spirituelle régulièrement constituée, fût-elle méconnue de presque tout le monde et même de ses propres représentants, fût-elle réduite à n'être plus que l'ombre d'elle-même, cette autorité aura toujours la meilleure part, et cette part ne saurait lui être enlevée, parce qu'il y a en elle quelque chose de plus haut que les

> possibilités purement humaines, parce que même affaiblie ou endormie elle incarne encore "la seule chose nécessaire, la seule qui ne passe point". 73

At about the same time, Guénon's work came to the attention of a small group of Surrealists known as "l'équipe du Grand Jeu", which included René Daumal, Roger Vailland, Roger Gilbert-Lecomte, and André Rolland de Renéville. The affinities this group of artists and writers felt toward Guénon marked much of their work, and will be examined in chapter III.

On the death of his wife, Guénon seriously considered picking up roots and moving out of France, but he was offered an associate editorship in Le Voile d'Isis, a journal of esoteric studies published by Chacornac, who wished to give his publication "...une ligne doctrinale directement inspirée des écrits de René Guénon."[74] During the two years before Guénon left France for good (1928-1930), Le Voile d'Isis became, to all intents and purposes, a review of his thoughts and teachings. (In 1935, its name was changed to Etudes Traditionnelles, which the publication has kept to the present.)

In 1929, Guénon met the widow of a wealthy and cultured Egyptian, Hassan Farid Dina (née Marie W. Shillitoe, the daughter of a Canadian railroad magnate). Her husband, the author of La Destinée, la mort et ses hypothèses,[75] had died a few months before. She was very interested in Guénon's work, and persuaded him to accompany her to Cairo, where they would look for old Sufi manuscripts and texts of the Muslim mystics to bring back to Paris and stock a bookshop specializing in esoteric texts. They left for Cairo on February 20, 1930.

On Guénon's voyage to Egypt in 1930, Mme Boulet writes that "l'idée de s'installer dans un pays chaud, et à monnaie stable, devait le séduire _a priori_, tel que je le connus." The reason here given for the move is unjust, and seems to belie Mme Boulet's knowledge of her friend as it unfolds in their correspondence. The other reasons she gives for Guénon's definitive departure are not as naive as she fears: "On me jugera peut-être naïve, mais je suis convaincue que la double disparition de la femme qu'il avait aimée et de celle qui avait instruit son enfance avait creusé en lui un certain besoin mystique contre lequel son intellectualisme lutta toujours et que sa vie d'écrivain, à Paris, ne pouvait pas satisfaire. J'ignore les autres aspects de son évolution, mais il ne devait plus jamais revenir en France, pas même pour rechercher ses papiers rue Saint-Louis-en-l'Ile, ni pour vendre sa maison de Blois. De Dante et de saint Bernard,[76] il passait ainsi directement à l'Islam."[77]

Although the plans for a bookstore fell through and Mme Dina returned to France a few months later, Guénon remained in Cairo, taking an apartment near Al-Azhar University and working hard learning the language and accustoming himself to the ways of the country. He used his adopted name of Abdel-Wahed Yahya, "Servant of the Living One":

> René Guénon, islamisé et parlant l'arabe sans accent, sut incarner l'esprit de pauvreté en vivant une vie des plus modestes; il alla habiter pendant quelque temps à l'hotel Dar al Islam, situé en face de la mosquée Seyidna El Hussein, qui renferme les tombeaux de plusieurs descendants du Prophète. 78

Two of his most important doctrinal works were published soon thereafter--Le Symbolisme de la Croix in 1931 and Les Etats multiples de l'être in 1932. All of his following works would be devoted principally to the means of arriving at an effective metaphysical knowledge, and at what he called "la réalisation spirituelle", which constituted for him the only true product of knowledge. During the 1930's, Guénon became a regular contributor to a review, El Marifah, published entirely in Arabic.[79]

In 1933, he met Sheikh Mohammed Ibrahim, a Sufi and a descendant of the Prophet; he visited the elderly gentleman often, impressing him with his sincerity and eagerness to learn. "Il menait la vie la plus orientale, mangeant dans une écuelle commune, s'asseyant les jambes repliées sous lui, saluant en portant la main au coeur." His most ordinary actions seem to have impressed a contemporary chronicler.[80]

In 1934, Guénon married the Sheikh's daughter, Fatma, and they moved to Doki, a suburb of Cairo, where Guénon lived and wrote for the rest of his life.

Guénon wore a gold ring, engraved with the word "AUM". An English Islamist, calling himself Shaikh Abu-Bakr, who visited Guénon in 1939, says: "I always felt that his guru had given it to him. He had told his wife that the word meant God."[81]

Another visitor, G. Boctor, notes in L'Egypte Nouvelle (February, 1952): "...il faut surtout dire combien Guénon savait écouter. Il écoutait le silence, même plus attentivement peut-être que le reste....Sa physionomie naturelle était de celui qui interroge....Respect, discrétion: ce qu'il y avait de plus oriental dans son maintien, c'était une forme de politesse qui traduit la crainte d'importuner. Cette manière d'apparaître confus est une forme de pudeur. Mais René Guénon portait la qualité au plus haut point, jusqu'à en faire une sorte de courtoisie métaphysique."

Guénon kept in quite faithful touch with French intellectual thought during his years in Egypt, but he never left his chosen country again. He published La Métaphysique orientale in 1939, Le Règne de la quantité et les signes des temps in 1945, Aperçus sur l'initiation in 1946 (collection of articles written between 1932-1938), Les Principes du calcul infinitésimal and La Grande Triade in 1946. Two years later, he received his Egyptian naturalization, and died January 7th, 1951, at eleven p.m., after years of poor health complicated by an ailment of the lower limbs which remains imprecise and undiagnosed to this day. He had two children during his lifetime--daughters: Khadija, born in 1944, and Leila, born in 1947. A son, Abdel-Wahed, was born after his death, on May 17th, 1951.

Writing in a special issue, "In Memoriam", of Etudes Traditionnelles in 1951, Jean Reyor leaves us with the following picture of René Guénon's last hours: "Dans l'après-midi précédant la mort ... il put, assis sur sa couchette, procéder à toutes les prières et à tous les rites d'un dernier dhikr [prayer]. A travers toutes les écoles initiatiques d'Islam, il avait en quelque sorte totalisé sur lui l'initiation fragmentée dès longtemps. Le dhikr pratiqué était toujours épuisant. Dans les conditions présentes, l'effort était immense et une abondante sueur découlait de son front et de sa barbe blanche. La sueur avait une odeur de rose qui subsista jusqu'à la fin. Son dernier mot avant d'expirer fut le nom d'Allah...."

CHAPTER TWO: PART ONE

NOTES

NOTES

1. Paul Chacornac, La Vie simple de René Guénon (Paris, 1958), p. 24. The letter in question is dated April 18, 1951, some two months after Guénon's death.

2. Papus, "L'Occultisme et son état actuel," L'Initiation (May, 1907), p. 110.

3. Chacornac, p. 32.

4. Papus, in L'Initiation (June, 1908), p. 200.

5. Guénon's L'Erreur Spirite (Paris, 1953), is a reasoned exposé of the doctrinal shortcomings of this movement.

6. See L'Initiation (March, 1909), pp. 181-182.

7. Guénon, "La Gnose et les écoles spiritualistes," La Gnose (December, 1909), p. 20.

8. Chacornac, p. 36.

9. Lucien Méroz, René Guénon ou la sagesse initiatique (Paris, 1962), p. 177.

10. Méroz, p. 178.

11. Guénon, in La Gnose (December, 1909).

12. L'Homme et son devenir selon le Vêdantâ (Paris, 1925), and Le Symbolisme de la Croix (Paris, 1931).

13. Guénon, in La France Anti-Maçonnique (July, 1913).

14. Paul Sérant, René Guénon (Paris, 1953).

15. Noële Maurice-Denis Boulet, "L'Esotériste René Guénon," La Pensée Catholique (No. 77, 1962), p. 20. I was fortunate to obtain permission from the Denis family in Alençon, France, to consult Guénon's correspondence with Noële Boulet, who died in Clermont (Oise) in 1970. The daughter of the painter Maurice Denis (1870-1943), and a close friend of Guénon, Noële Boulet received some forty letters from Guénon between the years 1916 and 1924 which contain some of Guénon's most important doctrinal writings. The correspondence will be referred to in this study as "Guénon-Boulet", followed by the date of the letter in question.

16. Ibid., p. 22.

17. Guénon, Orient et Occident (Paris, 1948), p. 212.

18. Chacornac, p. 83.

19. Jean Reyor, in Etudes Traditionnelles (January-February, 1955), wrote that, during his years in France, Guénon did not live the life of a practicing Muslim. Also, as Noële Boulet has written herself, "Guénon ne pouvait s'en faire un scrupule, puisqu'il pensait qu'un 'exotérisme' quelconque (ou même deux exotérismes à la fois?) était conciliable avec son 'ésotérisme'" (Pensée Catholique [No. 77, 1962], p. 24).

20. "Abdul-Hâdi" gave the work of Ibn-Arabi the title, Traité de l'Unité. See Boulet, Pensée Catholique (No. 77, 1962), p. 23.

21. Méroz, p. 50.

22. Boulet, Pensée Catholique (No. 77, 1962), p. 20.

23. Ibid.

24. Guénon-Boulet, January 3, 1918. Later, he adds, "comme les candidats ont, pour la plupart, de très bonnes notes en arabe, il leur suffit d'avoir 4 ou 5 en français et autant en latin pour être reçus."

25. Guénon-Boulet, January 3, 1918.

26. Ibid.

27. Guénon frequently refers to his inability to express purely "esthetic" ideas without their accompanying cosmological or metaphysical senses. His appreciation of the relationships which exist between the two domains--indeed, he considers them to be complementary domains--is quite explicit in his writings, as in his treatment of Antonin Artaud's brilliant piece, "La Mise en Scène et la Métaphysique," Nouvelle Revue Française (February 1, 1932), pp. 219-234, in Guénon's Le Théosophisme (Paris, 1969), pp. 449-452, examined more closely in Chapter III.

28. Guénon-Boulet, July 30, 1919.

29. In a letter to Noële Boulet on November 5, 1919, Guénon mentions a decision fixing an age limit for the agrégation: "D'après ce que m'ont dit mes collègues

... cette limite est de trente ans, mais n'est pas applicable aux candidats ayant déjà enseigné."

30. In a letter to Noële on December 15, 1919, Guénon writes: "Pour les leçons, j'ai en ce moment un élève; c'est un commencement, mais je voudrais bien pouvoir en trouver quelques autres."

31. Guénon-Boulet, December 15, 1919.

32. Guénon-Boulet, December 31, 1919.

33. Guénon-Boulet, March 30, 1919.

34. Guénon-Boulet, July 16, 1920. Guénon had originally submitted the ms. to Alcan, but Lévy-Brühl "m'a presque détourné d'Alcan, m'affirmant que celui-ci, même avec sa recommendation, ne voudrait pas se charger de faire les frais de l'édition." Financial problems were great hindrances in the publication of Guénon's early works.

35. Guénon-Boulet, August 3, 1920. "[Rivière] a consulté aussi Maritain, qui a appuyé; vous voyez que tout est pour le mieux." Maritain's approbation of Guénon's work was short-lived, however. Severe disagreements on points of doctrine caused a rift between the two.

36. Guénon-Boulet, September 17, 1920.

37. *Ibid*. The articles are contained in Guénon's massive work on the same subject. See *Le Théosophisme, Histoire d'une pseudo-religion* (Paris, 1921).

38. Guénon-Boulet, November 27, 1920. "Quand j'ai revu Rivière, celui-ci ne m'a plus fait d'objections et m'a dit seulement qu'on s'arrangerait par la suite pour les exemplaires à fournir (il en faut 67)..." In another letter, addressed to Noële Boulet on February 14, 1921, however, Berthe Guénon writes, "René n'a rien de nouveau ni pour son livre, ni pour son article. Il est même un peu tracassé au sujet de ce dernier, car il a peur qu'on le fasse paraître sans lui avoir renvoyé d'autres épreuves."

39. Boulet, *Pensée Catholique* (No. 77, 1962), p. 36. Mme Boulet's reasoning for this refusal, which does not seem to have disturbed Guénon unduly, is that "évidemment la méthode d'exposition de René Guénon n'avait rien de la méthode historique et critique universitaire."

40. Guénon-Boulet, November 19, 1921. "J'ai vu Maritain et

Massis, qui sont d'accord avec moi pour vous prier de vous charger du compte rendu de l'ouvrage dans la 'Revue Universelle'." On Guénon's brief encounters with Massis, see the letters of November 19, 1921, and March 4, 1922.

41. See Guénon's letter to Boulet, July 28, 1921, in which Guénon argues against the many misinterpretations he finds in the article in question. The sentence written by Maritain and accepted by Mme Boulet represents a total misunderstanding of Guénon's intentions and pursuits, and contains the "reason", if there can really be one, for Maritain's contempt for Guénon, which lasts to this day. In his letter cited above, Guénon writes: "Votre dernière phrase renferme une méprise qui m'a profondément stupéfait: où avez-vous bien pu découvrir que je propose 'une rénovation hindouïste de l'antique Gnose, mère des hérésies'??" I doubt that Guénon ever found out that Maritain had been the real author of that sentence.

42. Boulet, Pensée Catholique (No. 77, 1962), p. 38. Of her article in the Revue Universelle, the author writes in retrospect: "...je regrette certains aspects de mon article: à sa pensée je n'aurais pas dû opposer explicitement celle de saint Thomas.... Notre excuse est dans notre culture alors exclusivement ecclésiastique et universitaire" (pp. 38-39).

43. Ibid., pp. 40-41.

44. Guénon-Boulet, May 24, 1922.

45. Guénon-Boulet, October 30, 1923.

46. Guénon-Boulet, January 15, 1924.

47. Chacornac, p. 68.

48. In Les Nouvelles Littéraires (May, 1924).

49. Chacornac, p. 70.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., p. 71.

52. Léon Daudet, in L'Action Française (July 15, 1924).

53. Guénon, in Etudes Traditionnelles (January-February, 1949).

54. Chacornac, p. 76.

55. Guénon, La Métaphysique orientale (Paris, 1939), p. 14.

56. Ibid., p. 7.

57. Méroz, p. 68.

58. Guénon, Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues (Paris, 1921), p. 88.

59. Méroz, p. 82.

60. Gonzague Truc, "Souvenirs et perspectives sur René Guénon," Etudes Traditionnelles (January, 1951), in Chacornac, p. 81.

61. Méroz, pp. 138-139.

62. Ibid., p. 147.

63. Ibid., p. 174.

64. Ibid., p. 176.

65. Chacornac, p. 82. Italics mine.

66. Guénon, La Crise du monde moderne (Paris, 1957), p. 128.

67. Ibid., pp. 128-129.

68. Léopold Ziegler, "René Guénon," Deutsche Rundchau (September, 1934). In Chacornac, p. 84.

69. François Bonjean, "Souvenirs et réflexions sur René Guénon," Revue de la Méditerranée (March-April, 1951), p. 215.

70. Ibid., pp. 215-220.

71. Ibid.

72. Boulet, Pensée Catholique (No. 77, 1962), p. 41.

73. Guénon, Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel (Paris, 1947), pp. 117-118.

74. Sérant, p. 16.

75. Hassan Farid Dina, La Destinée, la mort et ses hypothèses (Paris: Alcan, 1928).

76. Reference here is made to Guénon's L'Esotérisme de Dante (Paris, 1925), and Saint-Bernard (Paris, 1929).

77. Boulet, Pensée Catholique (No. 78-79, 1962), p. 139.

78. Chacornac, p. 95.

79. See especially Guénon's "L'Influence de la civilisation islamique," (December, 1950), and "Connais-toi toi-même," (March, 1951), both translated in Etudes Traditionnelles.

80. G. Boctor, in L'Egypte Nouvelle (February 2, 1952).

81. Chacornac, p. 95. The text is from a letter written to the author by Abu-Bakr.

CHAPTER TWO: PART TWO

GUENON AND THE TRADITIONAL SYMBOL:

THE SACRED SCIENCE

René Guénon was published widely during his lifetime. His full-length works are in some twenty volumes, and do not include all of his shorter studies, which have yet to be assembled and published chronologically and en volume. His published correspondence is far from complete; the few close friends he wrote to are reluctant to release his letters for publication--an understandable attitude in light of Guénon's refusal to attach any importance whatsoever to anything he might have had to say about himself.

For reasons which should become clear, it is not my intention to present all of Guénon's works in this study. Such a work, while it would be invaluable, is clearly beyond the scope of an examination of the Traditional Symbol in his writings. The present chapter is devoted to the presentation and examination of three of Guénon's most fundamental doctrinal works: Le Symbolisme de la Croix, Aperçus sur l'Initiation, and La Grande Triade. Each is a work of synthesis, bringing together the numerous subjects of his lifetime studies; each presents a facet of his doctrine of symbolist thought which has the most direct bearing on literary studies. The three works taken together will give a coherent view, it is hoped, of what Guénon understood to be the armature and vehicles of the Primordial Tradition.

Where necessary to bridge certain gaps, I have felt free to weave in elements from other works of Guénon as well as direct references from the sacred texts he has used. In this way, hopefully, a concise plan of his vision will emerge.

EARLY SIGNS

It is safe to say that Guénon's most important doctrinal works were ready to be written long before they actually were; his *Symbolisme de la Croix*, as well as *La Grande Triade* and *Aperçus sur l'Initiation*, although published between 1931 and 1946, may be said to have been formed, in their essential lines, as early as 1909, when he founded the review *La Gnose* and first began to mark, in his editorials, the fundamental schism that existed between the various occultist "schools" and the doctrine which he believed to be the only valid one. For financial reasons (it had only 150 subscribers), *La Gnose* folded in February, 1912; but Guénon had by then prepared the draft of his first major work, *Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues*, published in 1921.

La Gnose was the last gasp of another ailing review, *La Voie*, which appeared between April 1904 and March 1907 under the joint editorship of two of Guénon's fellow occultists from the school of Papus (Encausse): Léon Champrenaud and

Albert de Pouvourville. The former, having turned away from Papus, had embraced Islam and taken the name of Abdul Haqq (عَبْدُ آلحَقّ), Servant of Truth. Pouvourville, equally disenchanted with Papus, made a pilgrimage to Tonkin, had been initiated into Taoism, and taken the name Matgioï (The Sun), under which his major works were published: La Voie métaphysique and La Voie rationnelle, as well as Les enseignements de la Gnose, which he prepared with Champrenaud.

While La Gnose continued under the influence of these two figures from his occultist days, Guénon was soon to begin asserting his authority as the propounder of a new movement in French mystico-intellectual thought. His first contribution to La Gnose--indeed, his first published work--was a short piece enigmatically titled Le Démiurge, in which he expresses, in essentially allegorical form, the relative nature of Evil and "la fatale illusion du dualisme". Man can, even during earthly life, he maintained, free himself from the bonds imposed upon him by Dualism (the "Démiurge" of the title). Echoing the Vedic doctrine first introduced by Shankarâcharya in his 9th century commentaries of the Upanishads, Guénon maintained that Man could successfully liberate himself from Dualism through Gnosis, or integral knowledge, reaching a state of absolute Perfection and becoming united with the One.

In the second issue of La Gnose, Guénon was to state that the purpose of Gnosis is to rid its faithful from all occultist doctrines, "et ne s'appuyer que sur la Tradition orthodoxe contenue dans les Livres sacrés de tous les peuples, Tradition qui, en réalité, est partout la même, malgré les formes diverses qu'elle revêt pour s'adapter à chaque race et à chaque époque."[1]

While Guénon soon repudiated the Gnostic Church (where he had once been consecrated a bishop), he never gave the lie to his first published work. Indeed, Le Démiurge may be seen as the earliest source of the most important doctrinal elements in Guénon's later works.

Guénon begins by attempting to unravel the classic dilemma: "Si Deus est, unde Malum? Si non est, unde Bonum?" Reducing all evil to the level of nature, Guénon says that evil "n'est pas autre chose que l'imparfait." Following this reasoning, he arrives at a definition of Good as Perfection:

> Les erreurs, ou plutôt les vérités relatives, ne sont que des fragments de la Vérité totale; c'est donc la fragmentation qui produit la relativité et, par suite, on pourrait dire qu'elle est la cause du Mal, si relativité était réellement synonyme d'imperfection; mais le Mal n'est tel que si on le distingue du Bien .... donc, au point de vue universel, le Mal n'existe pas. Il existera seulement si l'on envisage toutes choses sous un aspect fragmentaire et analytique, en les séparant de leur Principe commun au lieu de les considérer synthétiquement comme contenus dans ce Principe, qui est la Perfection. C'est ainsi qu'est crée l'imparfait; en distinguant le Mal du Bien, on

> les crée tous deux par cette distinction même car le Bien et le Mal ne sont tels que si on oppose l'un à l'autre, et, s'il n'y a point de Mal, il n'y a pas lieu non plus de parler de Bien au sens ordinaire de ce mot, mais seulement de Perfection. C'est donc la fatale illusion du Dualisme qui réalise le Bien et le Mal, et qui, considérant les choses sous un point de vue particularisé, substitue la Multiplicité à l'Unité, et enferme ainsi les êtres sur lesquels elle exerce son pouvoir dans le domaine de la confusion et de la division; ce domaine, c'est l'Empire du Démiurge. 2

Thus in Guénon's youthful vision, the problem of Good and Evil is finally resolved in terms of multiplicity and unity. Primary multiplicity being duality, then, the distinction between Good and Evil becomes merely a particular aspect of duality. Explaining duality (Spirit-Matter; Being-Non-Being) is Guénon's attempt to resolve all oppositions by asking, as he does, "Comment l'Unité a-t-elle pu produire la Dualité?"

A distinction must here be made between Duality and mere dualism which, Guénon maintains, is no more than a fatal illusion. When we speak of the dualism of Spirit and Matter, we understand that the two terms are irreducible in terms of each other. Yet it is clearly impossible to conceive of two distinct principles as being opposed to each other, for all principles are a part of Primary Unity. Thus if both principles are infinite, they would exclude or contain each other; if only one were infinite, it would be the principle of the other; and if both were finite, they would not be true principles, for saying that something finite can exist by itself is saying that something can come from nothing, for all that is finite has a beginning. In the last case, then, Guénon affirms, both Good and Evil, being finite, must proceed from a common principle which is infinite. Thus Guénon comes to consider the nature of what he calls the One Principle, for Duality, not existing by itself, is necessarily produced by Unity and cannot be separated from it. Evil, in this perspective, appears in the world only when, through a fatal illusion, it is conceived as separate from its Principle; this Guénon names "l'empire du Démiurge".

Man is represented in Genesis as being identical to one principle: the Logos, which is absolute Truth. He takes the name of Adam Kadmon. Then occurs the intervention of Nahash, which is egotism, the desire for an individual existence, the assertion, by implication, of a fatal dualism between Spirit and Matter. "Ce Nahash n'est point une cause extérieure à l'homme, mais il est en lui, d'abord à l'état potentiel, et il ne lui devient extérieur que dans la mesure où l'homme lui-même l'extériorise." This exteriorisation, obeying "un instinct de séparivité " [sic], causes the original (primeval) Adam Kadmon to divide himself, the separate parts constituting Adam Protoplastes, "le premier formateur". Under the impulse of Nahash, which by its nature provokes division and creates separate forms, Man is pushed to taste of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil:

> Alors les yeux de l'homme s'ouvrent, parce que ce qui était intérieur est devenu extérieur, par suite de la séparation qui s'est produite entre les êtres; ceux-ci sont maintenant revêtus de formes, qui limitent et définissent leur existence individuelle, et ainsi l'homme a été le premier formateur. Mais lui aussi se trouve désormais soumis aux conditions de cette existence individuelle, et il est également revêtu d'une forme, ou, suivant l'expression biblique, d'une tunique de peau; et il est enfermé dans le domaine du Bien et du Mal, dans l'Empire du Démiurge. 3

The original Adam Kadmon, then, is the Universal Man of Le Symbolisme de la Croix; containing all human possibilities, he is Plato's Androgyne, which produces duality and represents primordial unity. In the inverse faces of the two Adams, one light and the other shadowy, resides the primordial archetype of the Traditional Symbol here under consideration.

The Démiurge creates matter, primordial chaos, which is the repository of all form; organizing "cette Matière chaotique et ténébreuse où règne la confusion," the Démiurge produces the multiple forms which constitute Creation. The Démiurge may be envisaged as the collective sum of all beings inasmuch as they are distinct from each other and have, each in its own right, an individual existence. The Démiurge is therefore neither Good nor Evil; containing both, it is both, it is the Principle.

The moral of this parable is that Man can and must escape the clutches of the *Démiurge*, that escape is possible for Man "dès son existence terrestre", Gnosis, or integral knowledge, is the means to escape, for it consists, according to Guénon, in understanding that Creation suffers from imperfection only if considered analytically as separate from its Principle. If, on the other hand, Creation is seen as one of the constitutive elements of total Perfection, it is that we are placing ourselves "au point de vue universel", a point of view which can absorb all duality in the one Unity, erasing all distinctions based on superficial dualisms such as Good-Evil and Spirit-Matter. From the universal point of view, indeed, Matter no longer exists; material appearance is no more than illusion. In reality, all is Spirit: "En réalité, l'Esprit universel est l'Etre, et non tel ou tel être en particulier; mais il est le Principe de tous les êtres, et ainsi il les contient tous; c'est pourquoi tout est Esprit."[4]

AT THE CROSSROADS

Two of Guénon's major doctrinal works were published as rough drafts, during his three years as editor of *La Gnose*. The first, appearing in 1910, has the same title as the completed work finally published in 1931: *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*; the draft article contains the most important doctrinal elements in the book, looking to Christianity and Oriental traditions to find "une harmonie profonde et une unité réelle sous la diversité des formes extérieures."[5] The second, published in 1911, is titled L'Homme et son évolution posthume selon le Vêdântâ; this draft provides the earliest source of two of Guénon's last works which deal specifically with revelation in the Vedic writings: L'Homme et son devenir selon le Vêdântâ (1925), and La Grande Triade (1946). All three are major works in Guénon's construction of what he was to call "a harmonious edifice", all three works are pointed to in Guénon's earliest writings (he was 23 in 1909), and all three find their synthesis in Guénon's last published work, the highly abstract Aperçus sur l'Initiation (1946).[6]

In his writings, Guénon does not give enough information about his teachers or initiators in Hindu and Taoist esoteric doctrine, although we have several indications that he was initiated by true members of those traditions. Chacornac, whose biography of Guénon is based largely on personal experience, maintains that his subject's study of Oriental doctrine was not second-hand: "Nous savons que Guénon n'a pas étudié les doctrines orientales et les langues orientales de façon livresque. Nous avons eu a ce sujet, son témoignage catégorique."[7] Chacornac cites the affirmation of this in an article published in an Indian review, Jayakarnataka, in 1934, in which the author, a Frenchman, states:

> [Guénon] présente le cas très rare d'un écrivain s'exprimant dans une langue occidentale et dont la connaissance des idées orientales a été directe, c'est-à-dire essentiellement due à des maîtres orientaux; c'est en effet à l'enseignement oral d'orientaux que M. René Guénon doit la connaissance qu'il possède des doctrines de l'Inde, de l'ésotérisme islamique et du Taoïsme, aussi bien que celle des langues sanscrite et arabe....8

The author states that Guénon stands apart from most European or American scholars in this respect, for while these latter sometimes collaborated with Asians, they did so merely to facilitate the kind of bookish study "conçu suivant les méthodes de l'érudition occidentale." Chacornac indicates that a draft of this article had been forwarded to Guénon before its publication, and that Guénon had added the words "et du Taoïsme", quoted above, in the margin.

While it has not been possible to trace the identity of Guénon's teachers in Vedic and Taoist thought, it is highly possible that such teachers did in fact exist in his formative years. Chacornac believes that Pouvourville-Matgioï may have introduced Guénon to the son of a Taoist Master of Sentences, the "tong-sang" Luat, who was living in France in 1909-1911, and had been instrumental in the translation of Chinese texts used by Pouvourville in his La Voie Métaphysique. Guénon's acceptance of Shankarâcharya's commentaries of the Vedic writings is a matter of record, and would lead one to believe that his formation in Hindu thought was somewhat more than bookish and indirect; indeed, his treatment of the Veda in his later writings contains no reference whatsoever to an Occidental intermediary, and all translations into French are his own. His debt to Pouvourville in his study of Taoist doctrine, on the other hand, is abundantly clear in *Le Symbolisme de la Croix* and *La Grande Triade*.

Guénon's first-hand experience with Islamic esoterism is more easily traced. His *Symbolisme de la Croix* is dedicated to "the venerated memory of Esh-Sheikh Abder-Rahman Elish el-Kebir " (عَبْدُ آلرَّحْمٰن أليشى آلكَبيرُ), and dated 1329 on the Hegirah scale, or 1912 A.D. It is a curious date for a work that was not published until 1931; yet we remember that it was in 1912 that Guénon was formally initiated into Sufism by his dedicatory, and took the Muslim name of Abdel-Wahed Yahya: Servant of the Living One. Guénon had thus entered Islam "from within" long before his sojourns in North Africa and Egypt. From what I have been able to ascertain in his references to Muslim writings, his understanding of Arabic was excellent.

LE SYMBOLISME DE LA CROIX

Le Symbolisme de la Croix[9] is an attempt at explaining the significance of the cross as a symbol common to all traditions, and one of the most important components of the Primordial Tradition. It is a work of synthesis without once falling into syncretism--an operation, according to the author, which assembles a number of disparate elements _from the outside_, and is therefore incapable of presenting a cohesive unity, or forming a doctrine. Synthesis, on the other hand, is a process which operates from within, envisaging various elements in terms of a unifying principle, and presenting that principle as their deepest mirror, giving them "une unité analogue à celle d'un être vivant ou d'un édifice harmonieux" (_SC_, p. 47).[10] Beginning with this overriding principle, he does not lose sight of it as he contemplates the multiplicity of its manifestations, so as to obtain, "en dehors et au-delà des formes, la conscience de la vérité principielle" (_SC_, p. 47).[11]

Christianity in the Occident, according to Guénon, seems to have lost sight of the symbolic character of the cross, regarding it mainly as the sign of a historical fact; the two points of view are certainly not exclusive of each other, for in a sense the sign is a consequence of the symbol. In the Christian world, however, the tendency has been to believe that the admission of a symbolic sense necessarily obviates a historical or literal one:

> Une telle opinion ne résulte que de l'ignorance de la loi de correspondance qui est le fondement même de tout symbolisme, et en vertu de laquelle

> chaque chose, procédant essentiellement d'un principe métaphysique dont elle tient toute sa réalité, traduit ou exprime ce principe à sa manière et selon son ordre d'existence, de telle sorte que, d'un ordre à l'autre, toutes choses s'enchaînent et se correspondent pour concourir à l'harmonie universelle et totale, qui est, dans la multiplicité de la manifestation, comme un reflet de l'unité principielle elle-même (SC, p. 49).

This in a sense explains why the laws of a lower order can be taken to symbolize the realities of a superior order, where their most secret reasons live, and are at once their principle and their end. Thus certain natural phenomena, being the mirrors of superior, transcendent principles, are symbols of them. Historical facts also conform to this law of correspondence, unveiling certain superior realities of which they are the human expression; and this symbolic quality is especially true of events which are a part, in Guénon's words, of "sacred history", and most particularly of the circumstances surrounding the life of Jesus:

> ...si le Christ est mort sur la croix, c'est ... en raison de la valeur symbolique que la croix possède en elle-même et qui lui a toujours été reconnue par toutes les traditions; c'est ainsi que, sans diminuer en rien sa signification historique, on peut la regarder comme n'étant que dérivée de cette valeur symbolique même (SC, p. 52).

A corollary to the law of correspondences calls for a plurality of senses in the symbol: thus a historical sign can be considered as representing not only a metaphysical principle, but also the realities of all orders which are superior to its own but still contingent--for these realities are its second causes.[12] Effect can always be taken to mean the symbol of cause. Thus multiple, hierarchically superposed symbolic senses in no way negate each other, neither do they obviate the literal sense; they are, on the contrary, in perfect concordance, for they express in reality the applications of one and the same principle on different levels and in various orders. Thus, "ils se complètent et se corroborent en s'intégrant dans l'harmonie de la synthèse totale" (SC, p. 53). It is this quality of the symbol that makes of it a far less limited language than that we normally use, enabling it to communicate certain truths which are clouded in common speech. The symbol thus becomes "le langage initiatique par excellence, le véhicule indispensable de tout enseignement traditionnel" (SC, p. 53).

Like all traditional symbols, the cross has many meanings. Guénon's purpose, in this work, is not to develop them all equally, but to capture "le sens principiel", the metaphysical sense, which is the first and most important; indeed, all other senses proceed from this one, being contingent applications of it, and of more or less secondary importance. So it is the metaphysical order that he will examine, as the order of the cross which validates the symbol, legitimizes it, and is worthy of the attention of "traditional science".

In a chapter on the multiplicity of the states of being, Guénon defines certain terms which he uses throughout the work. Most of these terms, presented in Les Etats multiples de l'être (1932), have to do with the use of language to denote the forms of human being, for Man may be envisaged in an indefinite number of ways, of unequal importance, but all legitimate in their respective domains, "à la condition qu'aucun d'eux ne prétende dépasser ses limites propres, ni surtout devenir exclusif et aboutir à la négation des autres" (SC, p. 55). Thus in considering man in a metaphysical light, it would be necessarily insufficient to consider him as an individuality, for metaphysical considerations are universal, while individual forms are partial and contingent. In this context, then, Guénon discusses two germane terms in differentiating between Man as metaphysical and individual being, Soi and Moi respectively:

> Le Soi ... est le principe transcendant et permanent dont l'être manifesté, l'être humain par exemple, n'est qu'une modification transitoire et contingente, modification qui ne saurait d'ailleurs aucunement affecter le principe.

Fundamentally immutable, the Soi develops its possibilities in countless modalities which are different states of the total being. The Moi is just one of these states, otherwise known as "l'individualité humaine", which coexists, to varying degrees, with the other modalities of the total Being, in the eternal present:

> Le Soi est ainsi le principe par lequel
> existent, chacun dans son domaine propre,
> que nous pouvons appeler un degré d'existence,
> tous les états de l'être (SC, p. 58).

This multiplicity of states of being is a fundamental metaphysical truth, intimately related to the fact of Pure Being, which is the sum, in a continuing, ever-present moment, of all manifested states and all states of non-manifestation; it is the unlimited domain, in Guénon's words, of Universal Possibility. Thus Existence (strictly ex-stare) is a necessarily contingent state, "loin d'être toute la Possibilité," and merely a part of Pure Being; it is just a manifested state among myriad others, all conceived in equal terms, and representing an individual human state in its relative and partial aspect.

Various doctrines of traditional significance have dealt with the notion of Universal Man in their attempts to transcend the contingent state. The idea has often played a major role in poetry, and has been translated in terms of micro- and macrocosm in Occidental hermeticism, and as the Adam Kadmon, already mentioned, of the Hebrew Kabbalah; it is El-Insânul-Kâmil in Arabic (أُلانْسَانُ آلكامِلْ) in the visions of Mohyiddin Ibn-Arabi and El-Jîli, and the King (Wang) in Taoist doctrine (Tao-te-King, XXV). In all these traditions, the idea of Universal Man is taken to express, by analogy, the possibilities of what we might call Contingent Man; it is a supreme paradigm, serving at once to point up Man's shortcomings and the unlimited possibilities of his becomings. Thus all true analogies are applied in reverse; Guénon points to this process in his examination of the Seal of Solomon, a symbol formed by the union of two perfectly opposed triangles.[13] And, by extension, consider the reversed image of an object seen in a mirror: "ce qui est le premier ou le plus grand dans l'ordre principiel est, du moins en apparence, le dernier ou le plus petit dans l'ordre de la manifestation" (SC, p. 68).[14] There is thus analogy (though not similitude) between individual Man, relative and incomplete, and total Being, un-contingent and transcending all particular and determined modes of existence. This state is designated symbolically as Universal Man, of which Individual Man is a mere shadow:

> Si l'Homme Universel est le principe de toute la manifestation, l'homme individuel devra en être en quelque façon, dans son ordre, la résultante et comme l'aboutissement, et c'est pourquoi toutes les traditions s'accordent à le considérer en effet comme formé par la synthèse de tous les éléments et de tous les règnes de la nature (SC, p. 69).

Man's central role in this scheme of Universal Being makes possible "...la réalisation de l'individualité humaine intégrale," which corresponds to the Primordial State, known as the state of Grace in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Indeed, the traditional conception of the Universal Man exists in terms of the transformation of individual existence into one principial being (SC, p. 71).[15]

An additional preliminary remark is in order before we go on: Universal Man exists only "virtually", negatively, in the manner of an ideal archetype, as long as he has not been given actual and positive existence by his human shadow. These two states, one negative and the other positive, correspond to the related states of Judaeo-Christian Man: before the Fall, and following Redemption; they are the two Adams of Saint Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (XV), showing the relationship of Universal Man to the Logos:

> The man made of dust is the pattern of all men of dust, and the heavenly man is the pattern of all the heavenly. As we have worn the likeness of the man made of dust, so we shall wear the likeness of the heavenly man.

In speaking of "negative" and "positive" existence, Guénon is aware of the imperfections inherent in Occidental languages, which are "peu adaptées à l'expression des vérités métaphysiques" (SC, p. 72); he goes on to state his intent, due to this lack, to use verbal images, albeit carefully, so as to make himself more clear. In an area where the utmost precaution must be exercised in the use of words, Guénon does not fail to give the language of poetry its full due.

A certain diversity of traditional symbolic forms is legitimate in Guénon's framework, as is the synthesis which he develops in his doctrinal studies. Traditional forms, according to him, can be compared to different paths leading to the same destination, but which are nonetheless distinct each in its own way. Since it is impossible to follow more than one path at the same time, and since the seeker begins on one path, it is necessary for him to follow it through to its end without wandering. He who has followed his path faithfully must necessarily dominate all others, for he no longer needs to take them, and they are thenceforth unified in their common principle.[16] In his study of Hindu doctrine, Guénon conceives of traditional metaphysics as expressed primarily in a symbolic mode. Since metaphysics is based on fundamentally inexpressible elements, "l'enseignement concernant l'inexprimable ne peut évidemment que le suggérer à l'aide d'images appropriées, qui seront comme les supports de la contemplation;... cela revient à dire qu'un tel enseignement prend nécessairement la forme symbolique."[17]

In this sense, symbolic expression is of a higher order than philosophy, which is fundamentally discursive by nature, and depends on the exoteric mode to render its meaning. Thus symbolism "a son fondement dans la nature même des êtres et des choses, il est en parfaite conformité avec les lois de cette nature, et ... les lois naturelles ne sont elles-mêmes, au fond, qu'une expression et comme une extériorisation, si l'on peut dire, de la Volonté divine ou principielle."[18]

Taken in this context, then, symbolism may be said to have no properly historic origin, for no traditional symbolic mode can be attached to a human inventor.

Universal Man is symbolised in all traditional doctrines by a sign which is directly related to the Primordial Tradition; the sign is common to these traditions in the form of the cross, which represents the perfect communion of all states of Being, for they are at once harmoniously integrated in the symbol, and radiate their various levels in the two senses of Amplitude and Exaltation. The two terms are Guénon's synthesis of the esoteric language of Islam. In the Occident, the symbol of the Rose-Cross had the same meaning before recent exoteric interpretations disturbed its acceptance as a traditional symbol (SC, p. 82).[19] These terms express the simultaneous unfolding of Being, taking place horizontally to denote a certain level or degree of determined existence, and vertically to denote the hierarchical superposition of all degrees of Being. Thus Amplitude comes to be expressed in the horizontal axis of the cross, which is "l'extension intégrale de l'individualité prise comme base de la réalisation" (SC, p. 74); this extension consists in the indefinite development of a group of possibilities or modalities, one of which would be the flesh itself.

The state of Exaltation is expressed in the vertical axis, being "la hiérarchie, indéfinie aussi et à plus forte raison, des états multiples, dont chacun, envisagé de même dans son intégralité, est un de ces ensembles de possibilités, se rapportant à autant de 'mondes' ou de degrés, qui sont compris dans la synthèse totale de l'Homme Universel" (SC, p. 75).[20] Thus when El-Hindi, in his Epistle on the Manifestation of the Prophet identifies Muhammad as Universal Man, it is in considering the perfect harmony of "States of Being" expressed by the locus of the two axes. The concept of Universal Man is in no way contradictory or divergent in its relationship to the Logos on one hand, and to the Prophet on the other, making a fundamental divergence between Christianity and Islam impossible, at least in terms of the symbolic significance of the cross:

> Dans cette représentation cruciale, l'expansion horizontale correspond ... à l'indéfinité des modalités possibles d'un même état d'être considéré intégralement, et la superposition verticale à la série indéfinie des états de l'être total (SC, p. 75). 21

The locus of these axes is "la totalisation effective de l'être," being beyond all conditional or contingent modes; it is what Hindu doctrine calls Moksha, or Deliverance, and what Islamic esoterism names the Supreme Identity. In the latter doctrine, Universal Man is often represented by a cruciform figure of Adam-Eve, and has a sacred number corresponding to the word Allah.[22] In Hebraic doctrine, Man is "created male and female"; Genesis puts forth an androgynic state in the image of

God, which represents the Supreme Identity. In Islamic tradition, Allah commands the angels to adore Man,[23] for the androgyne is the complete human state, in which complementaries are in perfect equilibrium and most perfectly reflect the Creator. The cross thus considered becomes the symbol of the union of complementaries, the vertical axis representing the active or masculine principle, and the horizontal axis the passive or feminine principle.

The cross has other meanings, of secondary significance, which serve to affirm the plurality of meaning in all traditional symbols. Certainly these secondary meanings do not take away from the primary ones, but rather add to the understanding of them, and show, in Guénon's words, that "le véritable symbolisme, loin d'être inventé artificiellement par l'homme, se trouve dans la nature même, ou, pour mieux dire, que la nature tout entière n'est qu'un symbole des réalités transcendantes" (SC, pp. 82-83).

Some interpretations of cosmic signs have considered the cross as a spatial figure created by a combination of imaginary lines joining the points of the equator, the solstices and the equinoxes: the lines thus come to represent both a vertical and a horizontal cross. The superposition of the two cruciform planes, having a common center, forms a three-dimensional cross, whose branches point precisely in the six spatial directions, each of which corresponds to the six cardinal points which, with the center, form the septenary.

In his *Roi du Monde* (1927, Chapter VII), Guénon discusses the importance, in Oriental doctrines, of the seven regions of space and their correspondences with certain cyclic periods. The "spatial" cross is the symbolic representation of these divine stations, and may be found in the Occident, attributed to Clement of Alexandria in the *Cabbala* :

> Clément d'Alexandrie dit que de Dieu, 'Coeur de l'Univers,' partent les étendues indéfinies qui se dirigent, l'une en haut, l'autre en bas, celle-ci à droite, celle-là à gauche, l'une en avant et l'autre en arrière; dirigeant son regard vers ces six étendues comme vers un nombre toujours égal, il achève le monde; il est le commencement et la fin; en lui s'achèvent les six phases du temps, et c'est de lui qu'elles reçoivent leur extension indéfinie; c'est là le secret du nombre 7.[24]

The symbol is the same in the *Cabbala* , which mentions the Holy Palace as being in the center of the six directions of space; the Logos makes of emptiness (*Thohu*) something, creating that which *is* from that which *was not*; God thinks, and the Word (*Memra*) creates all things by his One Name.[25] The Divine Logos thus emanates from the center of things, radiating in space as well as in time; it is the "Centre du Monde" in every sense, its cruciform representation embodying both temporal and spatial dimensions.

In the passage attributed to Clement of Alexandria, it will be noted that the six phases of time correspond respectively to the six directions of space; these are six cyclic periods, subdivisions of history and considered as milennia, which represent the duration of the finite world: the Zohar as well as the Talmud are clear on this, that "the world will subsist during six thousand years, as indicated by the first six words of Genesis."[26] Each milennium, furthermore, is analogous to each of the six days of creation, the Bible stating that "a thousand years are as one day in the eyes of the Lord." The seventh milennium, corresponding to the Sabbath, is the crucial "phase de retour au Principe, qui correspond naturellement au centre, considéré comme septième région de l'espace" (SC, p. 87).[27]

It is important to avoid taking these indications as "real" expressions of historical duration: Guénon's purpose is to establish a symbolic chronology in traditional, essentially initiatic thought, so as to lay the groundwork for further reflections on the nature of the cross as symbol. Thus it would suffice to indicate the presence of six indefinite phases of historical duration (of indeterminate length), as well as a seventh, corresponding to the accomplishment of all states of being, and serving to reestablish all in a primeval state; all temporal cycles thus come full circle and are united with the One.

Guénon uses this system of spatial symbolism throughout this work. In the language of geometry, the three-dimensional cross is known as a system of coordinates, to which all notions of space may be related. In this work, the spatial cross symbolises "l'ensemble de toutes les possibilités, soit d'un être particulier, soit de l'Existence universelle" (SC, p. 95). The entire concept is rendered by three axes, one vertical and the remaining two horizontal; the axes are three rectangular diameters of an indefinite sphere, and these diameters are oriented towards the six cardinal points. Thus in the interpretation of Clement of Alexandria, the top and bottom correspond to Zenith and Nadir respectively, the left and right to North and South, the front and rear to East and West. The vertical axis is the principal one, and corresponds to the polar axis, joining the two poles, and around which the world rotates. The two horizontal axes are secondary and relative: they are the axis of the solstice (North-South), and the axis of the equinox (East-West). Keeping in mind this geometric interpretation Guénon shows that astronomy was involved, via cruciform symbols, in an attempt to discover the multiple states-of-being of the world in terms of its place in the Universe.

The cross is perhaps best known as a symbol of the union of complementaries. Although the two-dimensional representation of the cross is generally used to point out this union, Guénon notes that the same would apply to the three-dimensional figure, which is an extension of the first.[28] The vertical line represents the active principle, and the horizontal the passive: the two principles are often considered analogous to a certain traditional "human order", assigning a masculine role to the active principle, and a feminine one to the passive. Taken as reflections of the totality of universal manifestation, Hindu doctrine gives each principle a name: Purusha and Prakriti. These terms reflect the sense of an order, and in no way differentiate between individuals on the basis of gender. Thus both feminine and masculine principles may be manifested in one person to reflect a harmony of a higher nature. Terms such as "active" and "passive" would be meaningless were they not considered in relation to each other, for complementarism is essentially a correlation between two terms. It becomes evident, states Guénon, that "un complémentarisme comme celui de l'actif et du passif peut être envisagé à des degrés divers, si bien qu'un même terme pourra jouer un rôle actif ou passif suivant ce par rapport à quoi il jouera ce role" (SC, p. 105).[29] In this sense, the vertical axis joins all states of being by crossing all their respective centers: it is the locus of "manifestation", which Oriental traditions call the "Activity of Heaven", which Guénon translates as "l'activité non-agissante", for, being the Principle, it does not act iself, but is the cause of all acts. The horizontal plane, on the other hand, is the locus of divine reflection, represented symbolically as "the surface of the waters"; in all traditions, this is a symbol of universal passivity. Thus while the idea of Universal Man constitutes the equilibrium known to Occidental symbolism as Adam-Eve, it becomes symbolised in Oriental doctrine as the harmonious union of the twin principles of Purusha and Prakriti. In this respect, the cross as symbol of the union of complementaries comes to constitute the Primordial Androgyne, which exists as such in all traditions. Thus in the totalisation of all states of being, we see this balance created, for "les complémentaires doivent effectivement se trouver en équilibre parfait, sans aucune prédominance de l'un sur l'autre" (SC, p. 107).

Guénon notes, in this connection, that the Androgyne is often symbolised by the sphere, for it proceeds equally from its center in all directions; the Pythagorians regarded it as the most perfect form and the figure of universal totality.[30] To give this sense of totality, the sphere must be indefinite, as are the axes of the three-dimensional cross:

> La sphère, étant constituée par le rayonnement même de son centre, ne se ferme jamais, ce rayonnement étant indéfini et remplissant l'espace tout entier par une série d'ondes concentriques, dont chacune reproduit les deux phases de concentration et d'expansion de la vibration initiale (SC, p. 108).

These two phases of concentration and expansion are themselves an expression of complementarism, for they actively evolve a process of simultaneity, creating a balance between each other;

their union is what Guénon calls "l'immutabilité principielle".[31]

The figure of the cross clearly differentiates between complementarism and the opposition of contraries. All oppositions in this symbol are of an inferior, superficial order, while the complementaries, in which all oppositions are resolved, correspond to a higher state. A mere opposition between two terms has a relative, essentially contingent reality, while the "unité principielle" symbolised by the cross demands that there be no irreducible oppositions, these being resolved by synthesis and integration, and passing into a higher order; thus "le complémentarisme même, qui est encore dualité, doit, à un certain degré, s'effacer devant l'unité, ses deux termes s'équilibrant et se neutralisant en quelque sorte en s'unissant jusqu'à fusionner indissolublement dans l'indifférenciation primordiale" (SC, p. 114).

It is at the center of the cross that all oppositions are reconciled and resolved; this major locus, or central point, is not fixed in itself, for it is absolutely independent of all space, being "le résultat de son expansion ou de son développement indéfini en tous sens, et qui, par conséquent, procède entièrement de lui" (SC, p. 118). This central point, to which Guénon attributes a primordial significance, is common to the oldest and most apparently opposed traditions, which in reality come to a fundamental agreement in representing a series of complementaries in terms of each other. Muslim symbolism considers this central point to be the Divine Station, reconciling all contrasts and antinomies. The Hebrew Cabbala calls it the Holy Paradise. Taoist doctrine has it as the Invariable Center, locus of perfect equilibrium as represented by the center of the Cosmic Wheel, where are reflected all Heavenly Activities. In Muslim esoterism, perception of and identification with this central point brings the "Great Peace", and the Arabic term for this station, "Es-Sakînah" (أُلسَكينة), is a designation identifying the Hebrew "Shekinah", which is

> la 'présence divine' au centre de l'être, représenté symboliquement comme le coeur dans toutes les traditions; et cette 'présence divine' est en effet impliquée par l'union avec le Principe, qui ne peut effectivement s'opérer qu'au centre même de l'être (SC, pp. 121-122). 32

All these interpretations of the central point consider the state as one of suspension in space, which Guénon identifies as "le vide"; it is the Non-Manifested, uniting the rays departing from the combination of axes, and creating the Wheel of Time. In itself, then, the center is nowhere and everywhere simultaneously, as is "le vide".

In the same spirit, Guénon notes, Taoist doctrine states: "Celui qui est arrivé au maximum du vide, celui-là sera fixé solidement dans le repos " (Lao-Tse). In the Li-Tse, "la paix dans le vide est un état indéfinissable; on ne la prend ni on ne la donne; on arrive à s'y rétablir." And again, in the Chuang-Tse: "L'idéal c'est l'indifférence, le détachement de l'homme transcendant, qui laisse tourner la roue cosmique." The same idea is expressed in Hindu doctrine by the state of *Chakravarti*, which Guénon translates literally as: "celui qui fait tourner la roue." Also, synthesis here comes to be intimately linked with a state of absolute simplicity: "Seul, l'esprit rétabli dans l'état de simplicité parfaite peut l'atteindre dans la contemplation profonde " (Li-Tse). This state of simplicity, notes Guénon, is none other than "l'enfance", which Hindu doctrine considers a *sine qua non* of the attainment of integral knowledge, and which the Scriptures mention on various occasions.[33]

At the central point, all distinctions which were inherent in the external points become indistinct, and eventually disappear at the "center of the center", all becomes perfect harmony, and a primordial state is created, which is the culmination of all human effort in traditional symbolism. The "moi distinct" slowly disappears, taking with it all elements of the external "forces" which create all space. This reduction of the distinct self, which finally disappears as it is absorbed in the "center of centers", is much the same state of being as "le vide" discussed above; ~~it is~~ *El-Fanâ* (أُلفَنَاء) of Islamic esoterism, which conceives of the central point as the only true end, which embodies all beginnings:[34] "Pour celui qui se tient au centre, tout est unifié, car il voit tout dans l'unité du Principe" (SC, p. 129).

In an attempt to further develop the symbolism of the cross, Guénon traces the development of a related symbol, known variously as the Tree of the Center or Tree of the World, both concepts in turn symbolic of the major (vertical) axis of the three-dimensional cross discussed above. This vertical axis constitutes the trunk of the tree, while the two horizontal axes represent the branches:

> Cet arbre s'élève au centre du monde, ou plutôt d'un monde, c'est-à-dire du domaine dans lequel se développe un état d'existence, tel que l'état humain qui est envisagé le plus habituellement en pareil cas (SC, p. 141).

In Biblical symbolism, this is the Tree of Life, growing in the center of Paradise, which itself represents the center of our world.[35] Besides the Tree of Life, Paradise contained another tree, which is generally better known: the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The relationship between these two symbolic trees has always been mysterious; Guénon notes that, immediately after designating the Tree of Life as being at the center of the Garden, the Bible names the Tree of Knowledge, which is then also designated as being at the center of Eden.[36] When Adam eats of the forbidden fruit, he has only to "stretch out his hand" to take of the fruit of the Tree of Life.[37] It will be remembered that the Lord, in forbidding Adam to taste of the fruit, refers only to "the tree which is in the middle of the Garden" in one passage; only in relating it to an earlier passage do we realize that specific reference was being made to the Tree of Knowledge. This apparent confusion would tend to confirm the idea that the two trees are intimately linked in their symbolic senses. Indeed, certain emblematic trees contain features of both Biblical trees. Guénon's intention here is to study this correspondence in its relationship to the cross.

The Tree of Knowledge, as its full name indicates, is characterized by an essential duality, for the terms Good and Evil, far from being complementaries, are fundamentally opposed to each other; in fact, their raison d'être lies precisely in this opposition, for without either term, the tree would lose its essential attribute: knowledge.

The Tree of Life, on the other hand, is essentially a symbol of unity, its function implying that of the vertical axis of the cross: the Axis of the World. Thus an emblematic representation would present an image of duality evoking the Tree of Knowledge, while in other respects the same emblem would evoke the Tree of Life. This is true of the Sephirothic Tree of the Cabbala , specifically named the Tree of Life, but whose left and right columns offer the image of duality; on the other hand, the middle column, "où s'équilibrent les deux tendances opposées," is the locus of true unity as symbolised by the Tree of Life. Guénon mentions a popular medieval symbol in this context: the Tree of the Dead and of the Living, whose two sides show fruits representing evil and good deeds in an unequivocal evocation of the Tree of Knowledge; yet its trunk, portrayed by the figure of Christ, is clearly identified as the Tree of Life.

This dual nature of the Tree of Knowledge is not properly revealed until the Fall, for only then does Adam "know good and evil", and only then does he lose his place in the "Center of Centers", locus of Primary Unity to which the Tree of Life corresponds. It is to guard the way to the Tree of Life, then, that the Kerubim, armed with flaming swords, are placed at the entrance of Paradise; the "Center of Centers" becomes inaccessible to fallen Man, for he has lost his "sense of eternity", as well as his "sense of unity".[38] Thus in cruciform symbolism, a return to the center, by a restoration of the Primordial State, is the equivalent of reaching the Tree of Life and recovering the "sense of eternity". In this respect, it is understandable that the cross of Christ would be identified in medieval symbols with the Tree of Life (lignum vitae); yet a "Legend of the Cross" cited by Guénon has it that the cross of Christ was made of the wood of the Tree of Knowledge, thus indicating that this tree, having been the instrument of the Fall, becomes one of Redemption. The opposition thus alludes to the reestablishment of a primordial order: "Dans ce nouveau rôle, l'Arbre de la Science, s'assimile en quelque sorte à l'Arbre de Vie, la dualité étant effectivement réintégrée dans l'unité" (SC, p. 145).

In his own translation of a verse from the Bhagavad-Gîta, Guénon expresses much the same idea in Hindu doctrine:

> Il est un figuier impérissable, la racine en haut, les branches en bas, dont les hymnes du Vêda sont les feuilles; celui qui le connaît, celui-là connaît le Vêda. 39

The root is on top, representing the Principle; the leaves are below, showing the multiplicity of manifestation, all serving to point to the synthesis symbolised by the trunk: thus again, from duality, the initiate is invited to move "upwards", to unity. It is the eternal process in which all things begin from unity and return to it after an interval which produces duality, division, or differenciation--all of which are symptoms of manifested existence. Thus the tree as symbol can have a ternary form, such as the Sephirothic Tree, synthesizing in itself the nature of the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life, the ternary being decomposable into unity on one hand, and the duality of which unity is the resolved sum on the other. The cross of Christ always occupies a central position in symbolic representations of the Tree of Life; when it is represented between the sun and the moon, it acquires an added dimension: that of the World Axis, pointed to with great clarity in the Carthusian motto: "Stat Crux dum volvitur orbis." Guénon compares this image to that of Calvary, where Jesus' cross is flanked by two others: that of the "good" thief on his right, and of the "evil" thief on his left. In the synthesis of the center lies redemption, for the Tree of Life is at the center of the Terrestrial Paradise as well as Celestial Jerusalem, which are respectively at the beginning and the end of the symbolic cycle.

Other symbolic representations show two distinct trees, joined by one each of their branches, which are intertwined and produce a small branch from their common one: two complementary principles and the product of their union, which is the manifestation of the marriage of Heaven and Earth, of Purusha and Prakriti, of Yin and Yang, constituting once again the Primordial Androgyne, which is the mirror of Primary Unity.

In representations of the Terrestrial Paradise, the Tree of Life is in the center; from its base flow four rivers, in the four cardinal directions which trace the horizontal cross on the surface of the earth, corresponding to the domain of the human state. The four rivers, states Guénon, symbolise the elements; their single source corresponds to "l'éther primordial", which the Fidèles d'Amour called the Fountain of Youth (fons juventutis), always situated at the foot of a tree. The four rivers are then divided into four parts, which are the phases of a cyclic development, surrounding the entire representation of the Terrestrial Paradise. The total symbol is the horizontal plane (or cross-section) of the Universal Sphere discussed above. The completion of the Sphere occurs where the Tree of Life is represented as the center of Celestial Jerusalem; similar, in a way, to the first (horizontal) half of the Sphere, this half completes it. In apocalyptic symbolism, the tree bears twelve fruits (the Golden Apples of the Garden of the Hesperides), which are similar, Guénon believes, to the twelve Adityas of Hindu tradition (these are twelve images of the sun which must reappear simultaneously at the end of the cycle, being the manifestations of a unique and indivisible essence). Indeed, Guénon notes, many traditions portray the sun as a part of the tree, leaving it at the beginning of a cycle, and returning to it at the end. In Chinese ideograms, the character for "sunset" represents the sun come to rest at the top of a tree. In India, a ternary symbol shows three linked trees carrying three suns, once again representing the metaphysical voyage come full circle to repose in a primary equilibrium.

Guénon traces the swastika as belonging to various apparently disparate civilizations, and shows that it is directly connected to the Primordial Tradition. Guénon makes short shrift of the Nazi emblem, calling it arbitrary and antitraditional (SC, p. 157).[40] The figure is most commonly traced in the horizontal plane of the three-dimensional cross, and comes to represent a certain state of being. Far from being exclusively Occidental, the symbol is used extensively in the Orient as well as some parts of South America.

In the Journal des Débats of January 22, 1929, Guénon finds the account of an Indian uprising in Panama in 1925, carried out by the native Cunas, who "tuèrent les gendarmes de Panama qui habitaient sur leur territoire, et fondèrent la République indépendante de Tulé, dont le drapeau est un swastika sur fond orange à bordure rouge."[41] Guénon notes the association between the symbol itself and the chosen name of the republic: Tulé, Tula, or Thule are all early designations of the mythical supreme spiritual center of the world, thought to have been located in Tibet, at the North Pole, and even in Atlantis. The figure of the swastika has not disappeared in Europe; the Lithuanians trace the sign in their homes as a protective talisman, giving it its sanskrit name: swastika. The sign is in evidence, Guénon notes, in Celtic and pre-Hellenic art, where it is sometimes found in the form of two crossed letters "S", or with figures of keys forming its branches.

One of these signs, dating from early Christian iconography, and known as the "Cross of the Word", is formed by four Greek gammas whose angles are turned in towards the center: the interior of the figure, being cruciform, represents Christ, and the four gammas are the Evangelists. In the Occident, this figure was widely used as an emblem of

Christ in the Middle Ages.

The swastika, according to Guénon, is the sign of the polar attractions exercised upon and involving the world in its movement. Unlike the cross, whose extremities form a circle of infinite dimensions, the swastika, by the lines added to its cruciform center in right angles, forms lines which are tangential to the circle inherent in it. Thus since the circumference represents the manifested world (as has been pointed out in Guénon's analysis of the three-dimensional cross), the fact that the swastika's circumference is suggested clearly indicates that the symbol is not of the world, but of "l'action du Principe à l'égard du monde." As such, the swastika comes to symbolise an ascent to the level of the cross, implying an initiation that moves from the suggestion of Unity to Unity itself; it is a stepping-stone.

Having thus examined various facets of the cross as traditional symbol, Guénon points to the fact that cruciform figures embody a metaphysical significance which can now be examined more fully.

Much of geometric symbolism as we have seen it here represents degrees of Universal Existence, or "les états de chaque être," according to the two concepts of Man as macro- and microcosm. A degree of existence may be represented by a horizontal plane, stretching indefinitely in two dimensions which correspond to two indefinites: that of the individual on one hand, and that of all particular domains which are modalities of the individual. Every horizontal plane in the related symbols we have examined here represents a degree of Universal Existence, and contains all developments of one particular possibility: its manifestation constitutes, in its totality, a macrocosm, or a world. When a state of being is situated symbolically in a vertical plane only, there is a simultaneity of possibilities which constitutes a microcosm.

In considering an individual "being" in its totality represented by the three-dimensional cross, the horizontal direction according to which all modalities of all states of this "being" develop, as well as the vertical planes which are parallel to it, imply an idea of logical succession. The vertical planes which are perpendicular to it, on the other hand, correspond to an idea of logical simultaneity. Thus there is an analogy, in the totality of "being" represented by all planes of the three-dimensional cross, between a conception of man as microcosm and as macrocosm. This notion of Man as the central figure in the three-dimensional cross is clarified by Guénon in his examination of the symbolism of weaving. In Oriental doctrines, books of traditional wisdom are frequently designated by words that refer to weaving: the Sanskrit term sûtra means "thread", which is similar to the Latin sutura, having the sense of the verb "to sew". The

Arabic word *sûrat* (سورة), which is of unknown origin, is composed of the same elements as the Sanskrit *sûtra*, and denotes the chapters of the Koran. (*Sûrat* has the secondary meaning of "row" or "file".) Thus a book may be formed of a series of *sûtras*, as a piece of cloth is made of an arrangement of threads. The Chinese term *king* is the warp of a cloth, and *wei* its weft: the former term also designates a book of fundamentals, and the second the commentary. The early Chinese "knotted strings", Guénon notes, were used instead of writing, and are similar to those of the ancient Peruvians, who called them *quipos*. Guénon notes that while some have maintained that the *quipos* were used only for counting, there are indications that they also expressed complex ideas, and are known to have guarded the "annals of the empire". The early Peruvians had no other form of writing, yet possessed "une langue très parfaite et très raffinée" (*SC*, p. 179).[42]

The distinction between warp and weft in denoting traditional writings corresponds to the Hindu terms: *Shruti*, the result of direct inspiration, and *Smriti*, which is the product of reflection which is exercised on *Shruti*.

The interaction of these two fundamental acts inherent in weaving serves to clarify the symbolism in them: the warp, composed of threads stretched on the loom, represents the immutable, principle element; the threads of the weft, passing between those of the warp, represent the variable and contingent element, which is the application of the principle to each particular condition. Also, in considering one particular interaction of the two threads, one notes that their union forms the cross, of which the warp is the vertical line, and the weft the horizontal; every point of their union, being the meeting place of two threads perpendicular to each other, is the center of such a cross. Thus the vertical line represents that which unifies all states of being or degrees of existence by joining their corresponding points, and the horizontal line represents the development of one of these states or degrees. One can then say that the horizontal sense may represent the human state, while the vertical represents that which is transcendant in terms of that state. "Ce caractère transcendant est bien celui de la _Shruti_, qui est essentiellement 'non-humaine,' tandis que la _Smriti_ comporte les applications à l'ordre humain et est le produit de l'exercice des facultés spécifiquement humaines" (_SC_, p. 181).

In pointing to the concordance existing between various symbolic systems, Guénon examines that facet of the cross which symbolises the union of complementaries. In this sense, the vertical line stands for the active, or masculine, principle, the _Purusha_ of Hindu doctrine, and the horizontal line is the passive or feminine principle, _Prakriti_: all manifestation is produced by the "non-acting" influence of the first upon the second. By the same token, the Shruti is represented by the sun, which is direct light, while Smriti is the moon, whose light is reflected.[43] At the same time, Guénon notes, the sun and the moon symbolise the masculine and feminine principle, respectively, of universal manifestation in almost all traditions.

The symbolism of weaving is not only applied to traditional writings; it is also used to represent the world--indeed, "l'ensemble de tous les mondes, c'est-à-dire des états ou des degrés, en multitude indéfinie, qui constituent l'Existence universelle" (SC, p. 182). Thus in the Upanishads, the supreme Brahma is designated as: "That on which all worlds are woven, as warp and weft."

In Taoist doctrine, all beings submit to the continuous alternation of the two states of life and death, condensation and dissipation, which are the vicissitudes of the yang and the yin; Guénon cites the commentary of this Taoist concept, which calls it, in his words: "The going and coming of the shuttle on the cosmic loom" (SC, p. 182).[44]

In other traditions, the Universe, symbolised by this interaction of warp and weft, is represented by a book of initiatic significance. Guénon mentions the Liber Mundi of the Rose-Cross (Rosicrucians), and the apocalyptic Liber Vitae. This latter, in certain figurations, carries the seven seals and the lamb, and is placed, like the Tree of Life, at the source of the four heavenly rivers. Translating from an Arabic text of Mohyiddin Ibn Arabi, Guénon expresses this notion of the Liber Mundi in Islamic doctrine:

> L'Univers est un immense livre; les caractères de ce livre sont tous écrits, en principe, de la même encre et transcrits à la Table éternelle par la plume divine; tous sont transcrits simultanément et indivisibles; c'est pourquoi les phénomènes essentiels divins cachés dans le 'secret des secrets' prirent le nom de 'lettres transcendantes'. Et ces mêmes lettres transcendantes, c'est-à-dire toutes les créatures, après avoir été condensées virtuellement dans l'omniscience divine, sont, par le souffle divin, descendues aux lignes inférieures, et ont composé et formé l'Univers manifesté. 45

In Hindu tradition, another form of this symbolism of weaving is the spider weaving its web, "image qui est d'autant plus exacte que l'araignée forme cette toile de sa propre substance" (SC, p. 185). The spider seen in the center of its net evokes to Guénon the image of the sun surrounded by its rays, and corresponds to the figure in Christian iconography of the Heart of the World. Also, the threads which form the fabric of the world are equivalent to the "Hairs of Shiva", which are the lines of force of the manifested universe, whose directions in space are their representation in the corporeal order.

It seems clear, in considering the symbolism of weaving, that the warp and weft correspond perfectly to the major facets of the three-dimensional cross. Guénon states that the manifestation of a being in a certain state of existence is determined symbolically by the meeting which takes place between the thread of the warp with that of the weft. Each thread in the warp is thus a being "envisagé dans sa nature essentielle," a direct projection of the Soi, which relates all states to each other and maintains its unity in the face of their indefinite multiplicity. In this case, the thread of the weft which this warp thread meets at a certain determined point corresponds to a specific and defined state of being. The intersection of the two determines the relationship of this being with its cosmic "milieu".[46] The individual nature of a human being, then, is the result of the meeting of these two symbolic threads, and becomes "le point qui réalise toute l'étendue"(SC, p. 204).

These central points which unite all symbols of the cross are reflections of "le point primordial", which, being dimensionless, is also without form. This principal point defines all space, and is the center of it by the indefinite extension of the branches of the cross in the six directions or cardinal points of space:

> C'est l'Homme Universel, symbolisé par cette croix, mais non l'homme individuel (celui-ci, en tant que tel, ne pouvant rien atteindre qui soit en dehors de son propre état d'être), qui est véritablement la 'mesure de toutes choses',

> pour employer l'expression de Protagoras...
> (SC, p. 204).

The phrase, "measure of all things", appearing enigmatic in the preceding analysis, is explained further by Guénon in a chapter on the ontology of the Biblical revelation of the "Burning Bush". The formless, dimensionless Center is perceived in the individual center pointed to in the symbolism of weaving. Man is the major protagonist in between the two, at once embodying both and serving to polarize each. We thus have three elements here, the two points and their distance, which may be considered as the three elements in a proposition: the two points are the two terms of a proposition, and their distance expresses the relationship which exists between the two, as well as the element which ties the two points to each other. The simplest form of proposition is the attributive one--"I am a man"--in which the copula is the verb "to be expressing a special identity between the subject and its attribute. In some cases, the relationship between the two terms is one of "connaissance": a being looking at itself in order to know itself, becomes both subject and object of the proposition, which thus creates a "dédoublement" of the terms, which in reality are one and the same. All true knowledge, Guénon maintains, takes this form, implying a fundamental identity between subject and object: thus where there is "connaissance", the "knowing" becomes the "known", the "known" becoming an attribute (a modality) of the "knowing".

By this process of reasoning, we can consider Universal Being as "le point principiel dans son indivisible unité;" all "beings", manifested in Existence, are merely individual "participations" in Universal Being, which is thus polarized into subject and attribute without its unity being disturbed. The proposition of which Universal Being is both subject and attribute takes the form: "Being is Being" ("L'Etre est l'Etre"). Furthermore, it may be said that the proposition is the expression of a relationship between Being as subject ("that which is") and Being as attribute ("That which He is"); since the subject is "He who knows" and the object "He who is known", the relationship is Knowledge itself. But at the same time the relationship is one of identity, making absolute Knowledge a phenomenon of identity, in which the three terms --Knowing-Known-Knowledge--are in fact one and the same unity.

The traditional value of this method of reasoning is rendered explicit by its existence textually in the Scriptures in the account of God's manifestation to Moses in the "Burning Bush". When Moses asks its name, the answer is: "Eheieh asher Eheieh,"[47] normally translated as "I am what I am" or "I am who I am," but whose significance is "Being is Being." Eheieh should not be considered a verb; Guénon cites the continuation of the Biblical text, which makes it clear that the term is a noun, for Moses is told to tell the people: "Eheieh sent me to you." Here the second term is the reflection of the first as in a mirror ("image de la contemplation de l'Etre par Lui-même"), the copula introduced between the two terms to express their reciprocity. This corresponds exactly to the three terms inherent in the symbolism of the cross and Universal Man: "le point, d'abord unique, puis se dédoublant par une polarisation qui est aussi une réflexion, et la relation de distance (relation essentiellement réciproque) s'établissant entre les deux points par le fait même de leur situation l'un en face de l'autre" (SC, p. 211).

In summing up Guénon's presentation of the cross as a traditional symbol, it becomes clear that he considers the limits of the geometrically universal representations of the symbol, gradually introducing successive phases to amplify its indefinite dimensions. In the case of the sphere constituted by the three-dimensional cross, he considers the two planes which form that sphere: one vertical, the other horizontal. From this consideration, he further amplifies each plane to constitute two geometrically opposed spirals, each departing from the primary plane (vertical or horizontal) which is its root or essence. The horizontal plane represents a state of being, whose infinite modalities create the spiral which is the extension of all circumferences of this circular horizontal plane in a process of unlimited amplitude.

In this sense, the Taoist symbol of the yin-yang is "le cercle de la destinée individuelle," representing a specific individual evolution in only two dimensions (for it is traced in just one plane). Citing his friend and mentor Matgioï (Pouvourville), Guénon says of this circle:

> N'ayant point d'épaisseur, il n'a pas d'opacité, et il est représenté diaphane et transparent, c'est-à-dire que les graphiques des évolutions, antérieures et postérieures à son moment, se voient et s'impriment au regard à travers lui. 48

An important consideration here is that Guénon regards the terms "anterior" and "posterior" only in the sense of a causal, purely logical opposition, "qui ne saurait exclure la simultanéité de toutes choses dans l'éternel présent" (SC, p. 238). Thus the yin-yang symbol is divided in two parts, one obscure and the other clear, corresponding respectively and simultaneously to the anterior and posterior evolutions of being, both considered symbolically by comparison (though not necessarily or exclusively) with the human state, the former as dark states, and the latter as luminous. The dark domain is that of the yin, and the luminous that of the yang, which are respectively the feminine and masculine principle, the two being differentiated without being separated from the unity they symbolize.

Here again the Androgyne is evoked in its deepest sense, the yin and yang being linked by the alternating predominance of each. Taken separately, the symbol of the yin-yang may be represented as a circle; yet in the succession of individual modifications, it acquires the form of a helix, for "toute modification individuelle est essentiellement un vortex à trois dimensions."[49] There is but one human *stasis*, and one never takes the same path twice.[50] Thus entry and exit into and out of the symbol are not at the disposal of the individual, for they belong to the whorl (single turn of the spiral) inscribed on the lateral (vertical) surface of the *yin-yang*, and are "soumis à l'attraction de la 'Volonté du Ciel'."

Guénon quotes abundantly from the works of Matgioï to clarify this symbol; in applying ~~all~~ traditional symbols as reflections of Man's true state, Guénon points once again to the contingent element in his being, for Man has not in himself his sufficient reason: "C'est pourquoi le parcours de son existence, si on l'envisage sans tenir compte de la variation selon le sens vertical, apparaît comme le 'cycle de la nécessité'" (*SC*, p. 240). This "Cycle of Necessity" is contained in the horizontal plane of the *yin-yang*, which is also the plane of Amplitude. The force which completes Man is represented in the vertical helix of the symbol, which is the force of Exaltation. Without it, the individual is essentially incomplete, although this incompleteness does not affect his freedom, between birth and death, in terms of his earthly acts: that is but a moment--a modality--of his multiple states; during that particular moment, he is free to act, for in the "vital orbit" (*circulus vital*) of the species and the individual, "l'attraction de la 'Volonté du Ciel' ne se fait pas sentir."

In his earthly state, then, Man is symbolised by the two-dimensional figure of the yin-yang in Taoist doctrine; his place in the Universal Scheme being absolutely restricted between his birth and his death, his freedom is sometimes to seek the completion of his Amplitude by an Exaltation which he can at best desire. This restricted freedom is expressed in a remarkable passage from Matgioï, which Guénon cites:

> L'homme n'est pas libre de sa naissance ni de sa mort. Pour sa naissance, il n'est libre ni de l'acceptation, ni du refus, ni du moment. Pour la mort, il n'est pas libre de s'y soustraire; et il ne doit pas non plus, en toute justice analogique, être libre du moment de sa mort... En tout cas, il n'est libre d'aucune des conditions de ces deux actes: la naissance le lance invinciblement sur le circulus d'une existence qu'il n'a ni demandée ni choisie; la mort le retire de ce circulus et le lance invinciblement dans un autre, prescrit et prévu par la 'Volonté du Ciel', sans qu'il puisse rien en modifier. Ainsi, l'homme terrestre est esclave quant à sa naissance et quant à sa mort, c'est-à-dire par rapport aux deux actes principaux de sa vie individuelle, aux seuls qui résument en somme son évolution spéciale au regard de l'Infini. 51

The two phenomena thus accompany and complete each other in the symbol, for human birth is the immediate consequence of death in another state, and human death the immediate cause of birth in another circulus as well. One event cannot take place without the other.

Timelessness being inherent in the traditional symbol, there is a metaphysical identity between the intrinsic values of birth and death. As for their relative values, due to the immediacy of the consequences, death at the end of a cycle is superior to birth in the same cycle by virtue of the attraction of the 'Volonté du Ciel' on that cycle. In this order, then, the symbol of the yin-yang becomes a three-dimensional one, reflecting Man in its horizontal helix, and representing his ultimate possibilities, before birth and after death, in the Exaltation exercised upon his human individuality by the evolving helix whose path is the vertical plane of the symbol. The whole is Unity in its unlimited possibilities, of which one part is Man in his own "vital orbit". The influence of Heavenly Will on the development of the individual is parallel to the vertical axis, and takes place simultaneously in terms of a plurality of states of being, each of which constitutes an integral cycle of "horizontal" states; this transcendent influence, Guénon adds, does not reveal itself in one isolated state, for it crosses all planes of the horizontal helix in their centers, creating "l'harmonisation complète de tous les éléments constitutifs de l'état d'être correspondant" (SC, p. 244). This is what he means in speaking of the Invariable Center, where Divine Activity is reflected in every state of being. In the representation of a being, the vertical axis is the symbol of "la Voie personnelle", which leads to Perfection and is a specification of "la Voie universelle", which comes to be represented as an undefined, open spheroidal figure. To further clarify this notion, Guénon notes a true opposition between the terms "personal" and "individual": "La 'personnalité' est pour nous le principe transcendant et permanent de l'être, tandis que 'l'individualité' n'en est qu'une manifestation transitoire et contingente" (SC, p. 244).

Perfection, states Guénon, must be conceived "dans son sens absolu et total." It is only because of our human state that we are forced to modify its absolute quality. Thus in thinking of Perfection, we make its conception intelligible in a distinctive mode: this conception is "la perfection active", or the possibility of will operating in producing Perfection; this is identical to what Guénon previously calls "Heavenly Activity". In speaking of Perfection, we must also sensitize it, for language, like all forms of external expression, necessarily belongs to the sensory order; in this case, it becomes "la perfection passive", which is the possibility of action as motive or goal. Thus in Taoist doctrine, Active Perfection is Khien, and Passive Perfection is Khouen. "Khien est la volonté capable de se manifester, et Khouen est l'objet de cette manifestation" (SC, pp. 245-246). In turning to these relative terms to express the notion, we are only affirming our state as prisoners in the face of Absolute Perfection.

Matgioï expresses in geometric terms our inability to perceive the absolute: we cannot measure in ourselves the pace or path of the helix mirrored in the traditional symbol; "nous ne connaissons pas la valeur essentielle de cet élément géométrique, parce que nous n'avons pas actuellement conscience des états cycliques où nous passâmes, et que nous ne pouvons donc pas mesurer la hauteur métaphysique qui nous sépare aujourd'hui de celui dont nous sortons."[52] We thus have no direct means of perceiving the full measure of the action of Heavenly Will. By virtue of certain laws of correspondence known to the poet and the mathematician, it is known only by analogy, whose only significant vehicle is the traditional symbol--and even then, perception is often more than difficult. Thus: "Il n'est pas dit que la chose soit impossible, car elle est facilement compréhensible; mais elle n'est pas dans les facultés de la présente humanité" (SC, p. 96). A brief passage from the sacred Tchoang-Tseu, translated by Guénon, sheds further light on the problem:

> L'homme ne peut rien sur sa propre vie, parce que la loi qui régit la vie et la mort, ses mutations à lui, lui échappe; que peut-il savoir alors de la loi qui régit les grandes mutations cosmiques, l'évolution universelle? [53]

The question, at least as put in Guénon's work, does not appear to be purely rhetorical: it is at least possible to see to what extent we cannot know. This is the primary function of the traditional symbol.

In this sense, there is perfect concordance between all traditional symbolic forms; the meaning which exists in Guénon's examination and exposition of the vertical axis in Taoist symbolism corresponds to the Judaeo-Christian tenet, expressed in Scripture, in which there is an attributive relationship between the Logos (the "Volonté du Ciel" in action) and the Way, the Truth, and Life. The three coordinate axes already examined as the symbolic functions of Man as microcosm are the perfect counterparts to the three terms just mentioned: the Way is expressed by the vertical axis, and Truth and Life by the two horizontal axes. Universal Man is the Way, then, and intellectual and physical Man are the Truth and Life respectively. Thus Life is represented by the axis parallel to the direction in which each modality, each state of being, is developed, and Truth by the axis which reunites all modalities by crossing them perpendicularly in the same direction. Guénon makes it clear, however, that this presupposes that "le tracé de la croix à trois dimensions est rapporté à l'individualité humaine terrestre, car c'est par rapport à celle-ci seulement que nous venons de considérer ici la 'Vie' et même la 'Vérité'; ce tracé figure l'action du Verbe dans la réalisation de l'être total et son identification avec 'l'Homme Universel'" (SC, p. 251).

The vertical axis is the principle of light, known in Hindu doctrine as Buddhi and in Scriptures as the Celestial Beam or Divine Ray; it constitutes the superior, non-incarnate element in Man, which serves to guide him through the phases of universal evolution, crossing all states of being at the center of their horizontal planes, and forming the Invariable Center. This plane of light then illuminates his chaos, for "dans tous les cas, l'ensemble des possibilités de l'être ne constitue proprement qu'un chaos informe et vide,"[54] the thohu vabohu of Scripture. The center of this light is the center of the total being; its plane contains the horizontal branches of the three-dimensional cross, as well as its own (the Light's) source, which is the vertical branch, known as the Celestial Beam. The two entities of horizontal and vertical branches interact in a way which is analogous to the interaction of passive and active perfection, as well as that of the twin elements of substance and essence, Amplitude and Exaltation, Prakriti and Purusha, and yin and yang. It is, symbolically, the interaction of Earth and Heaven, evoking the primordial notion of "the surface of the waters", which once separated the Inferior Waters from the Superior Waters, thus distinguishing between the "deux chaos, formel et informel, individuel et extra-individuel, de tous les états, tant non-manifestés que manifestés, dont l'ensemble constitue la Possibilité totale de l'Homme Universel" (SC, p. 257). Thus in every single being (each individual state) considered in particular, a glimmer of this Light constitutes, in a manner of speaking, a fragmentary unity which contains the possibility of developing so as to become identified with total Unity, to which it is already essentially identical in absolute terms, containing in itself "l'essence indivisible de la lumière, comme la nature du feu est contenue tout entière en chaque étincelle" (SC, p. 257). The glimmer is the "Golden Embryo" of Hindu doctrine, irradiating in all directions from the center, and achieving, in its unlimited expansion, the perfect blooming of all possibilities. It is the Vedic Agni, center of the swastika, which is the cross traced in the horizontal plane, whose rotation about the center generates the evolving cycle constituting each element of the universal cycle. The center, only motionless point in this rotation, is the only driving force of the wheel, embodying the Logos, which is Dharma: "l'expression ... de la Volonté du Ciel" (SC, pp. 258-259). In traditional doctrines, this identity of Self to Principle is symbolised by flowers blooming on the waters' surface: the Oriental lotus, and the Occidental rose or lily.

The figure of a serpent entwined about a tree, states Guénon, is the helix traced about the vertical cylinder of the three-dimensional cross. The tree, as Guénon points out earlier in his work, is the symbol of the World Axis; the serpent then comes to symbolise the sum of all cycles of universal manifestation. In certain traditions, Man's voyage through different states of being is represented by "une migration de l'être dans le corps de ce serpent" (SC, p. 263). There is the same relationship between this figure and the Ouroboros (a serpent swallowing its tail) as there is between the complete helix and the circular figure of the yin-yang: that is, each spiral taken separately is considered as a plane. The Ouroboros represents the "indéfinité" of a cycle conceived by itself; in the case of the human state and the presence of a temporal condition, this "indéfinité" takes on a quality of perpetuity.

Guénon notes the presence of the symbol of Man's migration in the body of a serpent in the Gnostic Pistis Sophia, where the serpent's body is divided and subdivided according to the Zodiac. In the case of the Ouroboros, the same symbol is made more clear, and comes to represent Man's voyage in one cycle which, due to the circumstances of his physical existence, "se limite ... aux prolongements de l'état individuel humain" (SC, p. 263). The voyage, in this sense, has two possible and contrary directions on the vertical axis: ascent to a superior state, or descent to an inferior one; this explains why the symbolism of serpents has two aspects, one being beneficial and the other harmful. In the figure of the Caduceus or Mercury's Wand, this twin aspect is made tangibly clear, an equivalent of this in Oriental symbolism being the Brahmanic Wand, on which two lines coil in relation to the two directions of the rotation of the swastika.

The coiled serpent is found also in other symbols of the World Axis, notably in the figuration of the Omphalos as well as the Tibetan World Egg. The serpent is also found coiled around the mountain in Hindu tradition, in the symbolism of the "Churning of the Sea". Here, the serpent, known as Shêsha or Ananta, represents the "indéfinité" of universal Existence, which is coiled about Mêru, the Polar Mountain: the serpent is being pulled in opposite directions by the Dêvas and the Asuras, which are respectively superior and inferior to the human state. Guénon notes that here again, the serpent has the two opposing aspects embodied in the Caduceus. If these aspects are considered in terms of Good and Evil, there is a correspondence with the two facets of the Tree of Knowledge which Guénon discusses above. The analogy also exists with the two faces of Janus, for one is turned to the future and the other to the past. In its general aspects, the serpent appears, if not "evil" or "good", as a force which Man must deal with if he is to transcend his state. In this sense, the serpent (or dragon, which is a glorified equivalent) is often the guardian of certain symbols of immortality: thus the serpent coiled about the tree of golden apples in the Garden of the Hesperides, or the beech containing the Golden Fleece in the forest of Colchis. Guénon believes these are symbols of the Tree of Life, and represent the World Axis. For Man to transcend himself, he must escape from his cyclic concatenation and pass from the circumference to the center. Thus: "Il faut sortir de la série indéfinie des états manifestés et de leurs mutations pour atteindre l'Invariable Milieu, le point fixe et immuable qui commande le mouvement sans y participer" (SC, p. 267). Nothing is impervious to this influence, states Guénon; the difference between men is the difference between the serpents of the Caduceus: they face in different directions; thus some will not seek to perceive the influence, though they can do nothing about it. The proper sense of the word Islam is "submission to Divine Will", thus it is said in certain esoteric teachings, Guénon writes, that "tout être est muslim, en ce sens qu'il n'en est évidemment aucun qui puisse se soustraire à cette Volonté, et que, par conséquent, chacun occupe nécessairement la place qui lui est assignée dans l'ensemble de l'Univers" (SC, p. 270).[55] The distinction between the believer and the infidel occurs in that the former conforms consciously and voluntarily to the order of the Universe, while among the latter, "il en est qui n'obéissent à la loi que contre leur gré, et d'autres qui sont dans l'ignorance pure et simple" (SC, p. 270). The believer follows the "straight path", which is the "place of peace"; his compliance with Universal Will makes of him a participating member of the Divine Order.

The traditional concept of Being represented in the symbols examined by Guénon in Le Symbolisme de la Croix are in no way related to an anthropomorphic or geocentric conception of Being which may exist. In fact, he states, the two notions are infinitely different, for "la métaphysique pure ne saurait en aucune façon admettre l'anthropomorphisme"

(SC, pp. 272-273). If this distinction has somehow seemed vague in his study, it is, he believes, because "il faut nécessairement se servir du langage humain;" thus every intense idea becomes "figured", eventually taking the form of the thinker. This process is expressed by Shankarâcharya, whom Guénon quotes: "La pensée coule dans l'homme comme le métal en fusion se répand, dans le moule du fondeur " (SC, p. 273).[56] The phenomenon, Guénon adds, is an unfortunate consequence of our limited human state.

By this, then, it is clear that human individuality--even envisaged in its totality, and not necessarily confined to the corporeal modality--can not have a privileged place in the indefinite hierarchy of states of total being. Human individuality has its place, and occupies it "comme n'importe lequel des autres états et au même titre exactement," in keeping with the law of harmony which determines the relationships between all cycles of Universal Existence. Its place is mysterious to Man, because of his inability to step out of its conditions so as to compare them with those of other states, whose domains are inaccessible.

The symbols Guénon examines here offer a tangible representation of the higher order of which physical life is but one state. The evolving helix of the three-dimensional cross being perfectly regular in all its points, passage from one state to another takes place as logically and as simply as passage from one situation or modification to another inside a single state. In this case, there is absolutely no interruption to disrupt the order of universal causality. Yet there is one extremely important restriction in this perfect hierarchy in which Man is imprisoned; there is a moment of discontinuity in the development of a state of being:

> Ce moment qui a un caractère absolument unique, c'est celui où se produit, sous l'action du 'Rayon Céleste' opérant sur un plan de réflexion, la vibration qui correspond au Fiat Lux cosmogonique et qui illumine, par son irradiation, tout le chaos des possibilités. A partir de ce moment, l'ordre succède au chaos, la lumière aux ténèbres, l'acte à la puissance, la réalité à la virtualité (SC, p. 280).

When this "vibration" has reached its peak, Man no longer remains a slave to his particular cycle, for he embraces all cycles in the perfect simultaneity of "synthetic" and "non-distinctive" understanding, transcending all special conditions which define the degrees of manifested Existence. This transformation (literally, "passage beyond form"), in effectively identifying Universal Man, is Deliverance; it is a state which is possible to earthly Man, and obtains "la libération absolue et complète des conditions limitatives de toutes les modalités et de tous les états" (SC, p. 282). Guénon's role in the present study is not to identify the effective process by which Deliverance takes place, but to point to the possibilities open to Man, for while Universal Man admits of no true anthropomorphic designation, Humanity may be said to play the central role in our human conception of Universal Man. In this strict sense, a certain anthropocentrism, restricted and relative to be sure, is necessary to obtain "la transposition analogique à laquelle donne lieu la notion de l'homme, et, par conséquent, la dénomination même de l'Homme Universel" (SC, p. 284). Thus in attempting to accomplish this realization, Man is permitted to place himself in the ideal center of his restricted plane--much like Dante who, in the temporal symbolism of his work, places himself in the middle of the "Great Year" in order to accomplish his voyage through the "three worlds". This is the return to the primordial state during life, the most important condition of Deliverance. Buddhist doctrine calls it tchenn-jen or Veritable Man, who has found the Unchanging Center, thus escaping from the "wheel of things". Above this degree is cheun-jen, or Transcendent Man, who has gone beyond humanity and is free of its conditions, having reached "Supreme Identity" and in fact become Universal Man. In Islamic doctrine, Veritable Man is Primordial Man, El-Insânul-Kadîm (أَلانسانُ آلقَديمْ), and Transcendent Man is Universal Man, El-Insânul-Kâmil (أُلانسانُ آلكامِلْ). The difference between the two terms is not important in absolute terms, for while Veritable Man is still in his plane in the vertical helix, and Transcendent Man above in the hierarchy of the helix, both have found the Unchanging Center, which is the path to Absolute Unity. The slight difference between the two concepts serves to clarify one of Guénon's most cherished traditional symbols: that of the Great Triad.

Far-Eastern doctrine conceives of the Great Triad as being composed of the three terms: Heaven, Earth and Man; the last term is the mediator between the two others, embodying their two natures in himself. We have already seen that Individual Man participates in both terms of Heaven and Earth as symbolised by the three-dimensional cross, embodying the twin qualities of Exaltation and Amplitude. For Man to participate effectively in Universal Existence, he must attain his place at the "centre de toutes choses", which is the state already examined of Veritable Man, who reaches the Unchanging Center in one degree of his existence. This degree is amplified totally, as we have seen, in the notion of Transcendent Man, who is the true mediator, in whom the union of Heaven and Earth is accomplished by the synthesis of all degrees. In this, Universal Man (Transcendent Man) is the embodiment of the Logos. Much of traditional Occidental teaching finds its deepest explanation in this: the union of Heaven and Earth in the Triad corresponds to the two natures, divine and human, in the figure of Christ, who is Universal Man. Among the oldest Christ-symbols is the six-pointed star, commonly known as the Hexagram or Seal of Solomon by virtue of the two triangles inverted with respect to each other;[57] thus in the hermetic symbolism found in passages of Thomas Aquinas, the upright triangle comes to represent the Divinity, and the inverted triangle human nature (in the image of God, but reflected in the "Mirror of the Waters"). The hermetic ternary signifying Man is *spiritus*, *anima*, and *corpus*, which are in perfect harmony with the alchemists' ternary of sulfur, mercury, and salt. In the symbolism of numbers, the Seal of Solomon is the figure of the number 6, which is the "conjunctive" number, the number of union and mediation. Guénon notes that it is also the number of creation and, as such, points to the Logos, "*per quem omnia facta sunt*" (*SC*, p. 289).[58]

The cross drawn inside the Seal further reveals the role of the Logos in terms of Universal Existence; the vertical branch joins the summits of the two opposite triangles (the two poles of manifestation), and the horizontal branch is the Waters' Surface. Heaven and Earth, being complementary principles, respectively active and passive, their union is represented once again by the Androgyne. Participation in the two principles exists for all manifested (human) states of being, and is translated by the twin terms of the *yin-yang* symbol, but with varying proportions according to the predominance of each complementary term. Perfect union (i.e., perfect equilibrium between the two terms) can only be achieved in the "Primordial State". This explains why the conjunction of the two terms of the *yin-yang* constitutes the perfect circular form, which by extension corresponds to the perfect sphere in the symbolism of the three-dimensional cross. In the "total" state of Universal Being, there is no differentiation of the terms, and it becomes impossible to speak in terms of the Androgyne, "qui implique déjà une certaine dualité dans l'unité même" (SC, p. 290). It becomes possible, then, to speak only of "neutrality", a state which has transcended the distinction between "essence" and "substance".

Thus the notion of Man as Mediator between Heaven and Earth gives rise to an essentially anthropocentric symbolism, which simply disappears when there has been passage "beyond" manifestation, giving rise to the symbol of the three-dimensional cross as examined in this work: a sphere of unknown dimension, embodying all possibilities and in which all distinctions are resolved. Guénon quotes from Scripture: "Le ciel et la terre passeront, mais mes paroles ne passeront point." Universal Man, who is the Logos, thus transcends the distinctions of Heaven and Earth.

In his consideration of space as the theatre of traditional symbolism, Guénon makes it clear that he does not envisage the notion of space as "a sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere," according to the famous formula of Pascal. Guénon believes that Pascal may not have interpreted the notion properly. It is evident, he states, that "l'auteur des trop célèbres considérations sur les 'deux infinis', malgré ses mérites incontestables à d'autres égards, ne possédait aucune connaissance d'ordre métaphysique" (SC, pp. 292-293).[59] Guénon clarifies this objection: a plurality of infinites is impossible, for they would limit each other; Pascal may have meant "indefinites", which has a qualitative significance and would admit the notions of increasing and decreasing greatness which Pascal attributes to Man.

It is important to remember a fundamental law which must apply uniformly to Guénon's considerations of the traditional symbol: between the tangible object which is taken as symbol and the metaphysical principle which is being symbolised as properly as possible, the analogy is always inverted or reversed. Guénon's examination, above, of the analogy between Individual and Universal Man makes it clear that true analogy must take this form. Thus in considering space in its actual reality (and not as a symbol of Being), no point in it can properly be the Center, for "tous les points appartiennent également au domaine de la manifestation, par le fait même qu'ils appartiennent à l'espace" (SC, p. 294). In this sense, space is no more than the circumference of the Wheel of Things, the exteriority of Universal Existence. Even terms such as "exterior" and "interior", "center" and "circumference", are meant as symbolic terms: "L'impossibilité de se passer de tels symboles ne prouve pas autre chose que cette inévitable imperfection de nos moyens d'expression" (SC, p. 295). On the contrary, the symbol is our best means of expressing the correspondences and analogies which exist, but which are closed to the uninitiated. This is taken as fact by Guénon, who sees in this "le principe et la raison d'être de tout symbolisme, et toute expression, quel qu'en soit le mode, n'est en réalité pas autre chose qu'un symbole" (SC, p. 295).

If geometry may be regarded as analogical in its relationship to metaphysics, Pascal may be said to have missed the true analogy, which calls for an inversion or reversal of the two terms: Thus the Center, being "non-localised", is really nowhere, and the circumference is everywhere, for all distinctions and individualities are but elements of form, and points on the circumference of the Cosmic Wheel. Not only in "space", but in all manifested things as well, the exterior or circumference is everywhere, while the Center, which is "non-manifested", is nowhere--yet contains, by virtue of its "non-manifestation", the principle of all possible manifestations.

Thus the Center is Unity, which, being itself (Soi), cannot be anything but itself, for it can properly contain no duality. It is Perfection in its absolute being; in order to envisage it, one must pass, "par delà cette Unité, au Zéro métaphysique, qu'aucun symbolisme ne saurait représenter, non plus qu'aucun nom ne saurait le nommer" (SC, p. 300). The traditional symbol, then, becomes Man's penultimate possibility to name the unnamable, in his attempt to become conscious of the Identity of Being in which he participates. It is the only permanent aspect of the myriad modalities of Individual being, mirroring the transcendent, informal, non-incarnate element in Man, here named the Celestial Beam. It is this consciousness of the Law of Harmony which relates all universal phenomena; Guénon calls it "la sensation de l'éternité" (SC, p. 306).

LA GRANDE TRIADE

A natural sequel to Le Symbolisme de la Croix, La Grande Triade (1946) is Guénon's last full-length doctrinal examination of the traditional symbol. The subject here is the triad or ternary sumbol examined in the final chapters of Le Symbolisme de la Croix and here further amplified in the consideration of related symbols. The stepping-stone, in this case, is the Taoist ternary mentioned above, whose terms are Heaven, Earth and Man, the last being the mediator between the other two, and uniting in itself these two natures. The symbol properly belongs to Chinese tradition in this form, and translates the basis of one of the oldest Chinese secret societies, known as Tien-ti-huei: the Society of Heaven and Earth. As such, the symbol is found in the sixth century B.C., when Taoism and Confucianism first branched out from one traditional structure, the former in the esoteric, initiatic domain, and the latter in the exoteric or social one.

Guénon notes that great confusion and a certain unnecessary mysteriousness have clouded the subject of the triad in the Occident, where the so-called "occultist" perspective has been to explain the symbol by a simple across-the-board transposition of any and all triads to be found in any traditional symbolic structure. Thus, the triad here under consideration becomes a direct, linear analogy of the Christian Trinity expressed in the terms Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This, according to Guénon, is puerile and impossible. The Hindu triad of Trimurti (Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva) has suffered similarly--indeed is often translated as "Trinity" in Occidental texts. In all ternary symbols, "il s'agit bien évidemment d'un ensemble de trois aspects divins, mais là se borne toute la ressemblance."[60]

The Taoist triad is made up of two complementary terms and a third--Man--which is the product of the union of these terms or, in a somewhat different perspective, a product of their reciprocal action and reaction. Thus, in using terms borrowed from human imagery, the three components of the Christian triad would have to be Father, Mother and Son (this is precisely the case of the Egyptian triads, notably that of Osiris-Isis-Horus). In the Christian Trinity, however, the first two terms are not complementary in the same sense; the second is derived from the first alone, while the third term (Ghost), if it follows from the first two, cannot properly be a filiation, or indeed a resulting generation.

Certain heterodox Christian sects (the Gnostics in particular) have chosen to invest the Holy Ghost with a feminine character comparable to that of Mother. The error here is evident in that the Son is the second term of the Christian Trinity (not the third, as in the Taoist triad), and the Holy Ghost, following the Son, cannot correspond to the Mother. Also, the feminine characteristics attributed to the Holy Ghost in no way correspond to the essentially masculine, "paternal" role "qui est incontestablement le sien dans la génération du Christ" (GT, p. 21). It is in this truth, in fact, that Christian ternary symbols offer similarities with those of the Far East, for the role of the Holy Ghost in the generation of Christ corresponds perfectly to the activity ("activité non-agissante") of Purusha, discussed above, and known also as the principle of Sky or Heaven. The Virgin, on the other hand, is the image of Prakriti or passivity on earth. Christ, finally, is identical to Universal Man, representing the union of Heaven and Earth on the axes of the three-dimensional cross. Guénon's interpretation here would certainly give the lie to the notion that the Christian Occident knows but one ternary symbol.

Man in the Taoist triad is none other than Universal Man, who is in turn identical to Christ as Logos. The union of Heaven and Earth is the same as the union of two natures (one human, the other divine) in the figure of Christ. Yet the distinction between Heaven and Earth can only exist in manifestation, for, states Guénon in echoing Scripture: "Le Ciel et la Terre passeront, mais mes paroles ne passeront point." The Logos, as well as Universal Man (who is identical to it), transcends the distinctions of Heaven and Earth, "il demeure donc éternellement tel qu'il est, dans sa plénitude d'être, alors que toute manifestation et toute différenciation se sont évanouies dans la 'transformation' totale" (SC, p. 202). And Man, in his earthly reflection, represents the totality of possibilities open to each of his imperfect counterparts--each human being.

The concept of Universal Man has in it no trace of anthropomorphism, as has already been pointed out. Yet from the cosmic point of view, "l'humanité ... joue un rôle 'central' par rapport au degré de l'Existence auquel elle appartient, mais seulement par rapport à celui-là, et non pas, bien entendu, à l'ensemble de l'Existence universelle, dans lequel ce degré n'est qu'un quelconque parmi une multitude indéfinie..." (SC, p. 197). Each human individuality has in itself the possibility of making itself "central", of "centering" itself on the horizontal plane which it occupies. He who arrives at this central point is called Veritable Man in Taoist tradition--he is the truly "normal" man, in the sense that he has developed in himself "l'intégralité des possibilités de la nature humaine," and has therefore established himself in the Invariable Center, at the crossroads of the three-dimensional cross, thus escaping the vicissitudes of the Wheel of Things.

The Taoist Veritable Man is not to be confused with Universal Man. The latter, having achieved full accomplishment ("l'Identité suprême"), is no longer, strictly speaking, a man, having freed himself from the conditions inherent in his "humanness". Yet Veritable Man, in Guénon's vision, is virtually Universal Man, and may be called the Son of Heaven and Earth, according to the Taoist initiatic formula: "Le Ciel est son père, la Terre est sa mère." Thus in speaking of Essence and Substance in universal (metaphysical) terms, Guénon figures them as the superior and inferior poles of the vertical axis of the cross; and when they are designated as Heaven and Earth respectively, their relative place in the symbolic structure becomes all the more clear in the sensory appearances which serve them as symbols. All manifestation occurs between these two poles, and Man, besides being a part of this manifestation, symbolically constitutes their center as well, thus synthesizing them in his being:

> L'Homme, placé entre le Ciel et la Terre, doit être envisagé tout d'abord comme le produit ou la résultante de leurs influences réciproques; mais ensuite, par la double nature qu'il tient de l'un et de l'autre, il devient le terme médian

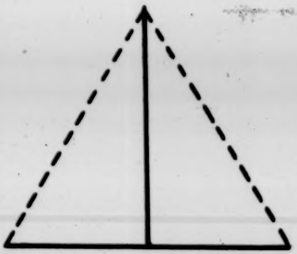
> ou 'médiateur' qui les unit et qui est pour ainsi dire ... le 'pont' qui va de l'un à l'autre (*GT*, p. 31).

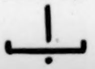
Thus in ordering the terms of the triad as Heaven-Earth-Man, the last term becomes the Son of Heaven and Earth. In the ternary of Heaven-Man-Earth, then, Man is Mediator.

The traditional Taoist formula for the triad is that "Heaven covers, Earth supports." This defines symbolically the place and role of each in terms of the "ten thousand", which is the symbolic figure Far Eastern doctrine assigns, in Guénon's words, "à tout l'ensemble de la manifestation universelle" (*GT*, p. 32). The formula clearly indicates, in its use of verbs, the twin roles of the Hindu notions of *Purusha* (the "non-acting" activity of Heaven) and *Prakriti* (the passive quality of Earth).[61] On a universal scale, Heaven and Earth in the Taoist ternary, taken separately from their common principle, are respectively the active and passive perfection of the terms *Khien* and *Khuen* which Guénon examined in *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*. Neither is absolute Perfection, for each is modified in the language of the symbol, implying a necessary limitation in each. They are merely Essence and Substance; as such, they share in an abridged form of universality, for they appear only through manifestation (through Man, the Mediator of the terms). In all cases, then, Heaven and Earth are always respectively an active and a passive principle, or a masculine and a feminine principle:

in this, the terms are "le type même du complémentarisme par excellence" (GT, p. 33).

In a complementarism whose two terms are envisaged as active and passive with regard to each other, the active term is generally symbolised by a vertical line, and the passive by a horizontal. Heaven and Earth are represented accordingly in the symbolism of the cross. In the case of the ternary symbol here under consideration, however, the two lines do not cross each other, for "il est évident que le symbole du Ciel doit être situé tout entier au-dessus de celui de la Terre" (GT, p. 34). The geometric representation of the symbol here would therefore be a perpendicular with its foot on the horizontal: the two lines may be considered as the height and base of a triangle, whose laterals, departing from the "action" of Heaven, determine the measure of the surface of Earth, and outline the "ground" which supports all manifestation. The figure thus formed is most commonly known in the Occident as the symbol of the Anglo-Saxon Masons: in constructive symbolism in general, the vertical is represented by the plumb-line, and the horizontal by the level. The relative disposition of the first two letters of the Arabic alphabet, Guénon believes, is related directly to the Taoist



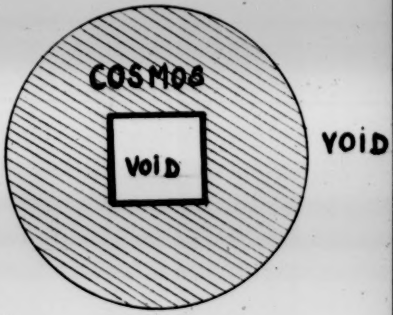
ternary which contains Heaven and Earth. Thus alif and ba in Islamic symbolism:  .[62]

Guénon notes that Far Eastern traditional symbolism frequently uses geometric forms: the circle to represent Heaven and the square to represent Earth. In Le Règne de la quantité et les signes des temps (1945), Guénon examines the far-reaching implications of geometric symbolic representations: the downward path of the cycle of manifestation, progressing from the superior pole (Heaven) to its inferior pole (Earth), may be considered "comme partant de la forme la moins 'spécifiée' de toutes, qui est la sphère, pour aboutir à celle qui est au contraire la plus 'arrêtée', qui est le cube."[63] In solid geometry, the sphere naturally corresponds to the circle, and the cube to the square. The first of these forms has a "dynamic" character, and the second an essentially "static" one; the two therefore correspond in turn to the twin principles examined above, one active and the other passive.

This correspondence can be further amplified, in examining the figure of the triangle above: the horizontal line exists in a plane whose dimensions may be a square; the vertical line is the ray or beam of a hemispheric surface, which meets the terrestrial plane according to the dimensions of the horizontal base. It is at their periphery or farthest confines (i.e., at the horizon), that Heaven and Earth meet according to sensory appearances. Guénon notes, however, that the reality symbolised by these appearances should be taken inversely, for, "suivant cette réalité, ils s'unissent au contraire par le centre." In their state of separation from each other, in order for the Cosmos to develop between them, Heaven and Earth communicate via the axis which passes through the center, separating and uniting them at once, and "measuring" the distance which separates them.

The same ternary structure has it that Heaven, embracing all things, presents to the Cosmos a "ventral" or interior face, while Earth, which supports all things, presents a "dorsal" or exterior face. This twin role of the symbol becomes immediately clear in a language such as Arabic, notes Guénon, where "ventral" is el-batn (أَلبَطْنُ) and "interior" el-bâten (أَلبَاطِنُ), while "dorsal" is ez-zahr (أَلظَهْرُ) and "exterior" ez-zâher (أَلظَاهِرُ).

The figure on the right is the Taoist representation of the same idea: Heaven and Earth are symbolised respectively as a circle and square, concentrically arranged, the total form reproducing that of Chinese coins.[64] The "solid" area is the Cosmos, territory of the "ten thousand", i.e., of all men. The fact that this "solid" area is included between two voids symbolically expresses that "ce qui n'est pas entre le Ciel et la Terre est par là même en dehors



de la manifestation" (GT, p. 37). The figure, Guénon notes, may seem inexact in one important sense, although this is "un défaut nécessairement inhérant à toute représentation sensible." It may seem that Heaven is external and Earth internal, but the analogy here implied between the symbol's meaning and its representation must be taken inversely, as has been shown above in Guénon's considerations of the cross. Thus in reality, and in every sense, the phenomenon of "interiority" belongs to Heaven, and that of "exteriority" to Earth.

The respective roles of Heaven and Earth in the Taoist ternary are expressed by the celebrated symbol of the yin-yang, whose figurative representation is that of a circle divided into two equal parts by a double spiral, one half being shaded (yin) and the other clear (yang). There are two central points along the vertical axis, a clear one in the shaded part, and a shaded one in the clear part: these central points indicate the existence of each principle in the other, for yin and yang are never without each other, their main principles being complementary rather than opposed. As Guénon points out in Le Symbolisme de la Croix, yang designates that which is active, positive and masculine, while yin is passive, negative, and feminine; the two categories are attached, respectively, to the two principles of Light and Darkness. While various Occidental interpretations have seen these principles as representations of Good and Evil, Guénon maintains that, being complementaries, they cannot be so interpreted. Rather, "*yang* est ce qui procède de la nature du Ciel, et *yin* ce qui procède de la nature de la Terre" (*GT*, p. 40), for it is from this primary complement that all others derive, including that of Light and Darkness. Thus the *yang* side of a being corresponds to that in him which is "of the spirit", for Spirit and Light are identified with each other in all traditions. The *yin* side of a being, on the other hand, corresponds to that in him which is "of substance".

> *Yang* est tout ce qui est 'en acte' et *yin* tout ce qui est 'en puissance', ... tout être est *yang* sous le rapport où il est 'en acte' et *yin* sous le rapport où il est 'en puissance', puisque ces deux aspects se trouvent nécessairement réunis dans tout ce qui est manifesté (*GT*, p. 40).

Thus the complementarism of the masculine, active *yang* and the feminine, passive *yin* signifies the androgynous facet or quality of each individual being, the being in question having a more completely androgynous (harmonious) quality as the two principles are found to be more perfectly balanced in it: "le caractère masculin ou féminin d'un être individuel peut donc être considéré comme résultant de la prédominance de l'un ou de l'autre" (*GT*, p. 41). The fact that the *yin* is traditionally named before the *yang*, thus seeming to contradict the hierarchical relationship which exists between Heaven and Earth, should not come as a surprise. From the cosmological point of view, it is essential, says Guénon, to proceed "en remontant", to proceed from that which is most immediately within human grasp, towards the more inaccessible summit, to go from the external (*yin*) to the internal (*yang*), contrary to the metaphysical process which, "partant du principe pour aller aux conséquences, va au contraire de l'intérieur à l'extérieur" (*GT*, p. 42). Terrestrial influences, which are *yin*, are sensed, while celestial influences, which are *yang*, are grasped only by intellectual faculties. In Christian doctrine, Darkness, identified with Chaos, is "in the beginning", while Light, which orders Chaos into the Cosmos, comes "after the Darkness". In this light, as it were, the *yin* "effectively" precedes the *yang*.

All manifestation, according to Guénon, is a series of alternating phases which, in Taoist tradition, are due to the "prédominance alternante" symbolised by the *yin-yang*: hence evolution, development, "déroulement" on one hand, and involution, envelopment, "enroulement" on the other; *catabasis* or descendant progression, and *anabasis* or ascendant force; "sortie dans le manifesté et rentrée dans le non-manifesté" (*GT*, p. 53). The double spiral evoked by these binary qualities of the *yin-yang* symbol comes to represent the most fundamental acts of life: it is the "expir" and the "aspir" which give rise, in Taoist doctrine, to the "condensations" and "dissipations" which result from the alternating actions of the two principles: *yin* and *yang*. In hermetic language, it is the "coagulations" and "solutions" which govern all manifested life; in the case of individuals, it is birth and death, the states which Aristotle called genesis and phthora, generation and corruption. In the case of the worlds, it is what Hindu tradition designates as the days and nights of Brahma.

> A tous les degrés, dans l'ordre 'macrocosmique' comme dans l'ordre 'microcosmique', des phases correspondantes se retrouvent dans tout cycle d'existence, car elles sont l'expression même de la loi qui régit tout l'ensemble de la manifestation universelle (GT, p. 54).

Guénon draws some revealing parallels between the symbolism of the yin-yang and the alchemical formula, mentioned above, of "solve et coagula"--considered by the alchemists as containing the secret to the accomplishment of the "Grand OEuvre"--inasmuch as the formula reproduces, in abstract terms, the process of universal manifestation. Masonic symbolism (notably the eighteenth degree of Scottish Masonry) has the term solve represented by a sign which shows Heaven, and coagula by a sign showing Earth. In this juxtaposition, the terms correspond to the ascendant and descendant currents of manifestation, which are the respective actions of the yang and the yin:

> Toute force d'expansion est yang, et toute force de contraction est yin; les 'condensations', qui donnent naissance aux composés individuels, procèdent donc des influences

> terrestres, et les 'dissipations', qui ramènent les éléments de ces composés à leurs principes originels, procèdent des influences célestes; ce sont là (...) les effets des attractions respectives du Ciel et de la Terre; et c'est ainsi que 'les dix mille êtres sont modifiés par _yin_ et _yang_', depuis leur apparition dans le monde manifesté jusqu'à leur retour au non-manifesté (_GT_, p. 56).

Thus the order of the two terms depends on the perspective in question: from the strictly cosmogonic point of view, it is the "condensation" or _coagula_ that naturally comes first; the "dissipation" or _solve_ will follow as the movement of a return to the non-manifested state. In proceeding from a given state of manifestation, the order becomes reversed:

> En effet, c'est 'l'expir' ou le mouvement d'expansion principielle qui détermine la 'coagulation' du manifesté, et 'l'aspir' ou le mouvement de contraction principielle qui détermine sa 'solution'; et il en serait exactement de même si, au lieu d'employer le symbolisme des deux phases de la respiration, on employait celui du double mouvement du coeur (_GT_, p. 57).

Guénon sees an exact correspondence between the binary values of "solution" and "coagulation" and the force which Christian doctrine designates as the "Power of the Keys". The Power in question is binary in relation to the alchemical formula, for "il comporte à la fois le pouvoir de 'lier' et celui de 'délier'; or 'lier' est évidemment la même chose que 'coaguler' et 'délier' la même chose que 'dissoudre'" (_GT_, pp. 59-60). This double power is generally represented by two keys, one gold and the other silver, corresponding respectively to spiritual and temporal authority, or to the holy and royal function, and also, on an initiatic level, to the "Great" and "Small" Mysteries.[65]

Man in this symbolic edifice is the Mediator of the two activities of the yin-yang; the initiatic formula governing him, as we have seen, is that Heaven is his Father and Earth his Mother. This determines his relationship with the two remaining terms of the Great Triad of Taoist doctrine, for it defines him as the Son of Heaven and Earth. Yet because the formula is, properly speaking, an initiatic one, the being it applies to in fullest measure is less "Ordinary Man" as he exists in the conditions of our world than "Veritable Man", "dont l'unité est appelé à réaliser en lui-même toutes les possibilités" (GT, p. 82). It is true, generally speaking, that "Ordinary Man" participates in the two poles of the triad, for each man embodies both yang and yin, an essence and a substance, "un côté 'en acte' et un côté 'en puissance'," an interior and an exterior. Yet there are degrees of relative participation in the poles, for in manifested beings, the influence of Heaven and Earth are combined in myriad forms and proportions. Thus Veritable Man, the initiate, more closely approaches Transcendent Man, who represents the highest, most perfect harmony with the Great Triad. The difference between Ordinary Man and Veritable Man, as we have seen, is that the latter,

> qui en effet doit seul, au point de vue traditionnel, être considéré comme l'homme réellement normal, ... possède vraiment la plénitude de la nature humaine, ayant développé en lui l'intégralite des possibilités qui y sont impliquées (*GT*, p. 83).

Occupying a central place in the framework of the three-dimensional cross, Veritable Man is the image of the "True Ancestor", otherwise identified as The One. In the *Tao-te-king*, he is "created in the image of God," he is the Androgyne, constituted by the perfect harmony of *yang* and *yin*. In *Genesis* (I, 27), the "Celestial Powers" (*Elohim*) create Man in their image (literally: "His shadow", or "His reflection"), thus: "In the image of *Elohim* He created him; male and female He created them." In Islamic esoterism, the idea is made clear in that the numerical equivalence of the words designating Adam and Eve, *Adam wa Hawâ* (آدَم وحَوَّاء), is exactly equal to that designating the name of God (Allah).[66]

Guénon points out that Veritable Man is none other than Primordial Man, for

> sa condition est celle qui était naturelle à l'humanité à ses origines, et dont elle s'est éloignée peu à peu, au cours de son cycle terrestre, pour en arriver jusqu'à l'état où est actuellement ce que nous avons appelé l'homme ordinaire, et qui n'est proprement que l'homme déchu (*GT*, p. 85). [67]

Initiation, in its initial stages, dealing with the possibilities of the human state, is primarily concerned with the restoration of the Primordial state:

> Par cette initiation, ... l'homme est ramené, de la condition 'décentrée' qui est présentement la sienne, à la situation centrale qui doit normalement lui appartenir, et rétabli dans toutes les prérogatives inhérentes à cette situation centrale (GT, p. 87).

In this sense, Veritable Man has moved beyond the "Small Mysteries" and progressed to the perfection of the human state; he is definitively established in the Invariable Center, and escapes the vicissitudes of the Cosmic Wheel, for the Center does not participate in the movement of the Wheel, but is "le point fixe et immuable autour duquel s'effectue ce mouvement" (GT, p. 87).[68] Thus while he has yet to reach the supreme degree of initiation (the discovery of the "Great Mysteries"), Veritable Man has passed from the circumference to the Center, from the "exterior" to the "interior", and fulfills "la fonction du 'moteur immobile', dont 'l'action de présence' imite, dans son domaine, l'activité 'non-agissante' du Ciel" (GT, p. 87).

In traditional symbolism, as we have seen, a ternary division is the most general and simplest means to define the constitution of Man. Guénon rejects the Cartesian duality of "esprit" and "corps" as corresponding in no way to reality. He holds to the traditional Occidental doctrine which conceives of Man in terms of the ternary of "Spiritus-Anima-Corpus". While this ternary was widely held in the Middle

Ages, the terms "Spiritus" and "Anima" have come to be used indiscriminately as synonyms; this, he finds, is "un des exemples les plus étonnants que l'on puisse donner de la confusion qui caractérise la mentalité moderne" (GT, p. 94).

The Spirit, in the Taoist ternary, is yang, while the Soul is yin: they are respectively essence and substance, and are often symbolised by the sun and the moon, for "l'esprit est la lumière émanée directement du Principe, tandis que l'âme ne présente qu'une réflexion de cette lumière" (GT, p. 99). The ternary is made more clear in considering the correspondences which exist between "Spiritus-Anima-Corpus" and the alchemical ternary of Sulfur-Mercury-Salt, whose components were taken, not as the similarly named terms of vulgar chemistry, but as principles of symbolic manifestations. Thus "le Soufre, que son caractère actif fait assimiler à un principe igné, est essentiellement un principe d'activité intérieure, considéré comme s'irradiant à partir du centre même de l'être" (GT, p. 103). In Man, this internal force is often identified with Will, not in the psychological sense, but in the sense of "Volonté Divine". Guénon notes that the Greek term theion, which designates sulfur, also means "divine". Also, in Islamic esoterism, Universal (Transcendent) Man, El-Insânul-Kâmil (أُلانسانُ آلكامِلُ), is designated as Red Sulfur, El-Kibrîtul-Ahmar (أَلكِبرِيتُ آلأَحْمَرُ), which is symbolised by the Phoenix. Between Universal Man and Primordial (Veritable) Man, the difference is that which exists between "l'oeuvre au rouge" and "l'oeuvre au blanc", which in turn correspond respectively to the perfection of the "Great" and "Small" Mysteries discussed above.

Mercury, considered in conjunction with Sulfur, is seen as acting from the exterior; its role is compressive, opposing the expansive, centrifugal action of Sulfur, and limiting it in a sense. In these complementary qualities, active-passive, interior-exterior, expansion-compression, it becomes clear that Sulfur embodies the qualities of yang and Mercury those of yin in the Taoist ternary, and if the former is of the order of celestial influences, the latter must correspond to that of terrestrial influences. Extending the properties and actions of each element, then, we find the interior action of Sulfur and the exterior reaction of Mercury to produce a crystallization, which determines "...une limite commune à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur, ou une zone neutre où se rencontrent et se stabilisent les influences opposées procédant respectivement de l'une et de l'autre." The product of this crystallization is Salt, which is "à la fois le type de la forme cristalline et le symbole de la stabilité" (GT, pp. 105-106).

Applying the alchemical ternary to the Taoist triad, Guénon identifies Sulfur to Spirit and Mercury to Soul, but finds that Salt does not necessarily correspond to the Body; rather, it is the median term of the remaining two terms and, like the Body, is situated "à la limite même des deux domaines 'intérieur' et 'extérieur' auxquels ils correspondent respectivement" (GT, pp. 106-107).

Man is expressed as the median term of the Great Triad; his place is expressed clearly in the hermetic Emerald Table, which is properly traditional in origin: "Il monte de la Terre au Ciel, et redescend du Ciel en Terre; il reçoit par là la vertu et l'éfficacité des choses supérieures et inférieures" (GT, p. 120).[69] Man here is the Mediator through whom effective communication takes place between Heaven and Earth. Numerous traditional symbols bear out this central role of man in the structure of the triad. The "trigrams" of the Yi-king have this ternary disposition, the three lines corresponding to Heaven, Man and Earth. In the hexagram, such as the Seal of Solomon, we have the same terms, the superior triangle representing Heaven and the inferior one Earth; Man here is implicit, and expresses the function of Mediator in uniting the two triangles in the symbol itself. In more specifically Christian terms, Man unites divine and human nature in the figure of Christ, whose effective role as Mediator is clear in Le Symbolisme de la Croix.[70] In Far Eastern symbolism, the tortoise is often used to represent the three terms of the Great Triad; its components effectively demonstrate the tangible, "natural" functions of the symbol: placed between the two sections of its shell, one superior and the other inferior, the creature is "covered" by the former and "supported" by the latter; each part is reminiscent of the two poles of the triad: the "cover" is rounded as is the representation of Sky, while the "support" is flat, as is the representation of Earth. The creature itself, naturally, represents the Mediator which joins and measures the two poles.

Guénon has indicated that ancient Chinese rulers wore robes which were rounded at the neck and shoulders, and square at the feet.[71] Similarly, in the symbolisms of Craft Masonry, Man is placed between the carpenter's square and the compass, which are the simplest geometric evocations of the straight line and the circle. In each case, in Orient and Occident, Man is at least represented as the Mediator between Heaven and Earth. Indeed, the two examples just given are all the more striking in that they have had seemingly no direct influence on each other. In Masonic symbolism, the compass is usually placed above, and the square below; between the two is the Shining Star, which is the symbol for Man in that the star has five points, and five is the sacred number of the microcosm. In some cases, Guénon notes, the figure of Man is represented in the center of the star, as in Agrippa's pentagram, where Man's head, arms and legs extend to the five points of the star.

The Occidental ternary known since medieval times by the formula Deus-Homo-Natura presents three terms which are closely associated with the Taoist triad. Indeed, the middle term is the same in Taoist symbolism. Yet the first term (God) is not "le Principe tel qu'il est en soi;" rather, it is the Principle envisaged in terms of the Cosmos. This corresponds to the Taoist notion of Heaven because, in that perspective, "le Ciel est l'instrument du Principe." If Natura can be taken to mean "la Nature primordiale et indifférenciée qui est la racine de toutes choses," then it is identified with the Earth of the Taoist triad. Thus taken as correlatives, God and Nature appear respectively as the active and passive Principles of manifestation, or as "acte" and "puissance" in the Aristotelian sense: "acte pur et puissance pure par rapport à la totalité de la manifestation universelle, acte relatif et puissance relative à tout autre niveau plus déterminé et plus restreint que celui-là" (GT, pp. 163-164).

In this context, Guénon underlines what he believes to have been Auguste Comte's deformation of the Deus-Homo-Natura ternary with his (Comte's) theory of the "three states". The positivist philosophers' work is often considered in terms of these three states; they held that the mind had passed, over the ages, through three successive stages, the first theological, in which phenomena were attributed tc supernatural agents, the second metaphysical, in which phenomena were explained in terms of "natural causes", and finally the positive, where, abandoning a search for causes, man studied laws based on certain apparently "constant" relationships between phenomena.

Guénon cannot agree with Comte's implication that each stage could have (even logically) given rise to the next; also, "dès lors qu'il est question de 'nature' et de forces naturelles, c'est évidemment de 'physique' qu'il s'agit et non point de 'métaphysique'" (GT, pp. 169-170). Furthermore, the ternary itself is false, and Comte's analysis "provient bien réellement d'une déformation et d'une application faussée du ternaire Deus, Homo, Natura" (GT, p. 171).

One Occidental ternary which Guénon believes to be a true analogy of Deus-Homo-Natura is that formed by "Providence, Volonté, Destin," considered as "les trois puissances qui régissent l'Univers manifesté" (GT, p. 172). Fabre d'Olivet has studied this ternary, drawing upon Pythagorian as well as Chinese thought,[72] and is quoted by Guénon: "L'homme n'est ni un animal ni une intelligence pure, c'est un être mitoyen, placé entre la matière et l'esprit, entre le Ciel et la Terre, pour en être le lien."[73] Fabre d'Olivet underlines the fact that Universal Man is situated between these two forces:

> Au-dessous de lui est le Destin, nature nécessitée et naturée; au-dessus de lui est la Providence, nature libre et naturante. Il est, lui, comme règne hominal, la Volonté médiatrice, efficiente, placée entre ces deux natures pour leur servir de lien, de moyen de communication, et réunir deux actions, deux mouvements qui seraient incompatibles sans lui (GT, p. 173).

Guénon notes that the two "moving forces" of Providence and Destiny are none other than the action and reaction of Heaven and Earth, the alternating movement of yang and yin. D'Olivet identifies the median term in the Occidental ternary, not just as Man, but as Human Will; this Guénon sees as "l'élément intérieur et central qui unifie et enveloppe les trois sphères intellectuelle, animique, et instinctive, auxquelles correspondent respectivement l'esprit, l'âme et le corps" (GT, p. 174). As the microcosm here symbolised corresponds to the macrocosm (though it is not equal to it), the three spheres are analogous to the universal "powers" represented by the ternary of "Providence-Volonté-Destin", and the median term, by its central role, is the image of the one Principle. Guénon again sees analogy between this ternary and the Pythagorian theorem presented below: d'Olivet saw that Human Will, by uniting with Providence and actively collaborating with it, would be in a position to neutralize Destiny by equalling its "force". By the same token:

> l'équilibre entre la Volonté et la Providence d'une part et le Destin de l'autre était symbolisé géometriquement par le triangle rectangle dont les côtés sont respectivement proportionnels aux nombres 3, 4 et 5, triangle auquel le Pythagorisme donnait une grande importance et qui, par une coïncidence très remarquable encore, n'en a pas une moindre dans la tradition extrême-orientale (GT, p. 177).

If Providence is represented by 3, Human Will by 4, and Destiny by 5, we have the triangle $3^2 + 4^2 = 5^2$, which is the simplest geometric paradigm of the celebrated formula. "L'élévation des nombres à la seconde puissance indique que ceci se rapporte au domaine des forces universelles" (GT, p. 177). The sum of the squares (on a universal scale in Guénon's analogy) provides for the safe neutrality of Providence and Human Will in the face of Destiny, this latter rendered ineffective by its "equality" to the combined forces of the former two.

In Taoist tradition, Tai-ki was the origin of the universe, when Heaven and Earth were as one. The appearance of "manifestation", a human identity giving proof of its existence, created the polarisation of being into essence and substance, and making communication between Heaven and Earth possible only "suivant l'axe qui relie entre eux les centres de tous les états d'existence, en multitude indéfinie, dont l'ensemble hiérarchisé constitue la manifestation universelle, et qui s'étend ainsi d'un pôle à l'autre, c'est-à-dire précisément du Ciel à la Terre" (GT, p. 121). Thus all triads symbolise Veritable Man at their centers; he alone, having reached the central point of his horizontal (earthly) plane, may rise in the hierarchy of the vertical axis.

All ternary symbols examined by Guénon in light of the Great Triad of Taoist doctrine operate as functions of two basic geometric forms: the square, which is of a temporal, earthly order, and the circle, which, as has been demonstrated, is a reflection of divine order. The circle is described, in Occidental as well as Oriental symbolism, in the respective forms of the Wheel of Fortune and the Cosmic Wheel. Man is assimilated in these circular figurations, whose center and circumference correspond respectively to Heaven and Earth. "Comme le rayon émané du centre 'mesure' le Cosmos ou le domaine de la manifestation, on voit encore par là que 'l'homme véritable' est proprement la mesure de toutes choses en ce monde" (GT, p. 191). Universal Man, who is the complete and perfect extension of all possibilities open to "ordinary" Man, naturally becomes the "measure" of Universal Manifestation. In the figure of the three-dimensional cross, formed by the two rectangular diameters of the perfect sphere, we have the symbol of Universal Man; indeed, every traditional ternary points to this symbol in that Man, in order to properly "measure" the two complementary poles of which he is the implied axis, must reside in the metaphysical Center which defines that axis and gives the symbol its true form.

The primordial character of such a symbolic structure is further clarified in that "ordinary" Man, whose central (human) point is Earth (the terrestrial pole), seeks to achieve "oneness" with the Universe, which is the celestial pole. The former is the locus of Veritable Man, while the latter, being the natural extension of the earthly into the divine, is the locus of Transcendent Man. The lower pole is the reflection of the higher: "En tant qu'il est identifié au centre, il est le point où se manifeste directement l'Activité du Ciel" (GT, pp. 201-202). In choosing to ascend on the axis joining the two "states" in which he has heretofore been but a mediocre participant, Man begins his long journey along what Guénon calls "la Voie du Milieu"; in so doing, he obviates the symbol by "being" it:

> Dès lors, il n'y a plus d'axe à proprement parler, comme si cet être, à mesure qu'il s'identifiait à l'axe, l'avait en quelque sorte 'résorbé' jusqu'à le réduire à un point unique (GT, p. 207).

Thus all notions of "high" and "low", "interior" and "exterior", "active" and "passive" disappear, as well as all sense of a "Way". Guénon repeats the words of Lao-tse: "La voie qui est une voie n'est pas la Voie."[74] For the being which has effectively established itself in this central point, "c'est ce point unique lui-même, et lui seul, qui est véritablement la 'Voie' hors de laquelle il n'est rien" (GT, p. 212).

APERCUS SUR L'INITIATION

> L'"homme moderne" est réellement inapte à recevoir une initiation, ou tout au moins à parvenir à l'initiation effective; mais nous devons ajouter qu'il y a pourtant des exceptions, et cela parce que, malgré tout, il existe encore actuellement, même en Occident, des hommes qui, par leur "constitution intérieure", ne sont pas des "hommes modernes", qui sont capables de comprendre ce qu'est essentiellement la Tradition, et qui n'acceptent pas de considérer l'erreur profane comme un "fait

> accompli"; et c'est à ceux-là que nous avons toujours entendu nous adresser exclusivement.
>
> René Guénon
> From a letter to Paul Chacornac.

To the criticism that his doctrine implies certain "elitist" tendencies, Guénon would no doubt reply that any intellective faculty, giving its share to intuition, may grasp the principles of his work. In this sense, certainly, the process must necessarily "create" an understanding (intellectual) elite, for not all men of reason have been prepared to accept Guénon's tenets. Noële Denis-Boulet, one of his oldest friends and intellectual companions, whose letters from Guénon I have been fortunate to secure for publication, was not always in agreement with him. Indeed, Guénon's earliest letters to this lady (the correspondence dates from 1919 to 1924) are unique in that he took the time to reply to her many reservations about his work, providing us with what I believe to be the only "dialogue" Guénon ever bothered to engage in with someone whose limited intellectual formation (she was strictly Catholic) was bound to create serious disagreements with a visionary whose media are world symbols and whose goal is the restitution of an intangible, universal archetype which cannot, by definition, be exclusively Christian.

Considering the term "elite" in its original sense of "elected", Guénon believes it constitutes "l'ensemble de ceux qui possèdent les qualifications requises pour l'initiation,"[75] these are always a small minority, especially in light of present world conditions. It is naturally pleonastic to speak of an "intellectual elite" within the framework of Guenon's "harmonious edifice"; all initiation, and therefore all "election" is an intellective, conscious process, leaving nothing to chance or accident, but pursuing its course to become one with the Symbol.

This study has attempted to show that Guénon's doctrine may be clearly demonstrated in order to present the components of Absolute Unity, and to show their interrelation in the formulation of the Primordial Tradition. In a sense, however, the study of Guénon's "working" principles is necessarily insufficient if it stops short at the "reasonable" exposition of his thought. We remember that two of Guénon's most articulate disciples, Frithjof Schuon and Michel Vâlsan, make abundantly clear that Reason has only a limited role in the ontology here under consideration. The properly initiatic quality of Guénon's vision must also be examined, for it above all provides the important link which exists in his work between Reason and Intuition, between ratiocination and symbolic thought, between a certain scientific relativism and the sort of correspondence we have come to identify with the poetic vision.

Although the problems of initiation have preoccupied Guénon since his earliest writings, his single most cohesive exposition of the initiatic element in symbolic thought is his Aperçus sur l'Initiation, published in 1946. While Guénon's articles on the problems of initiation are numerous, this work is not a selection of earlier writings, but a synthesis of approximately five decades of study and reflection. In many ways, Aperçus sur l'Initiation comes full cycle to reaffirm the earliest definition of initiation given by Guénon in 1910:

> Toute doctrine ésotérique ne peut se transmettre que par une initiation, et toute initiation comprend nécessairement plusieurs phases successives, auxquelles correspondent autant de grades différents. Ces grades et ces phases peuvent toujours se ramener à trois; on peut les considérer comme marquant les trois âges de l'initié, ou les trois époques de son éducation, et les caractériser respectivement par ces trois mots: naître, croître, produire. 76

Although this was written before Guénon's final break with the Masons in 1912, his exposition of initiation already prepares the way for his final treatise on the subject in 1946. Quoting abundantly from the works of Oswald Wirth, a Gnostic "brother" of Guénon's whose extraordinary study of the Tarot's major arcana is easily the finest in its field, Guénon conceives of initiation as a progressive search of the soul for Light. Submitting to the purifying influence of doctrinal light, Man's falsely protective shell slowly becomes less opaque and, when it has become limpid,

> laisse pénétrer les rayons de la Lumière extérieure jusqu'au centre conscient de l'initié. Tout son être, alors, s'en sature progressivement, jusqu'à ce qu'il soit devenu un Illuminé, dans le sens le plus élevé du mot, autrement dit un Adepte, transformé désormais lui-même en un foyer rayonnant de Lumière. 77

Wirth is in perfect agreement with Guénon in dividing initiation into three successive stages, consisting respectively in the discovery, assimilation, and propagation of the Light. In Masonic initiation, these phases once corresponded to the grades of Apprentice, Companion, and Master. The initiate may penetrate the esoteric element in each grade, Wirth believes, according to the degree of his initiation; there is, therefore, an unlimited number of ways to arrive at the various degrees of initiatic wisdom:

> En Maçonnerie, comme partout, il y a, sous ce rapport, beaucoup d'appelés et peu d'élus, car il n'est donné qu'aux initiés véritables de saisir l'esprit intime des grades initiatiques. Chacun n'y parvient pas, du reste, avec le même succés; on sort à peine, le plus souvent, de l'ignorance ésotérique, sans s'avancer d'une manière décidée vers la Connaissance intégrale, vers la Gnose parfaite. 78

Masonic symbolism thus understandably figures a "G" in a flaming star, standing for perfect knowledge as planned in the three initiatic degrees: the Apprentice must seek to penetrate the mystery of the origin of things; the Companion must seek to unveil the secret of human nature; the Master, finally, must reveal to himself the arcana of human destiny. Thus all forms or levels of initiation have the overriding purpose of obtaining transcendent knowledge, which is Gnosis in its original sense. Guénon is clear that Masonic doctrine must embrace no particular philosophy, must not be any more materialistic than it is spiritual, nor any more deistic than atheistic or pantheistic; it must be only itself:

> Chacun de ses membres, en entrant dans le Temple, doit se dépouiller de sa personnalité profane, et faire abstraction de tout ce qui est étranger aux principes fondamentaux de la Maçonnerie, principes sur lesquels tous doivent s'unir pour travailler en commun au Grand OEuvre de la Construction Universelle. 79

It was not long before Guénon realized that his outline of initiation and its meaning, although heartily supported by Wirth as well as Pouvourville and Champrenaud, could not possibly be taken up by the Temple faithful, Masonry having become, since the eighteenth century, a loosely organized bastion of material progress. The evil, Guénon believed, was "modernism", whose most sinister sign, as one of his works has indicated, is the "reign of quantity".[80] Modernism, states Guénon, designates "la tendance trop répandue qui ... se caractérise par l'abus de la critique, le rejet du symbolisme, la négation de tout ce qui constitue la Science ésotérique et traditionnelle."[81]

Certainly Guénon was against narrow formalism, believing that dogmatism was never a characteristic of true Masons. He goes so far, indeed, as to state that Tradition in no way excludes evolution or progress, believing that initiatic rituals can and must modify themselves in an effort to adapt to the variables of time and place; yet Masonry had turned away from its most fundamental tenets of self-examination and intellective growth, its members demonstrating "l'ignorance complète du symbolisme et de son interprétation ésotérique, l'abandon des études initiatiques, sans lesquelles le rituélisme n'est plus qu'un ensemble de cérémonies vides de sens, comme dans les religions exotériques."[82]

The closest Guénon ever comes to agreeing with the official interpretations of Masonry is in excerpting a definition of Masonic symbolism. The text itself, published in 1893, precedes La Gnose and may reflect a certain brief renaissance of traditional Masonry which took place toward the end of the nineteenth century. The definition, quoted by Guénon in an early essay, is revealing and provides a suitable stepping-stone to bridge the half-century which separates La Gnose and Aperçus sur l'Initiation:

> Le Symbolisme maçonnique est la forme sensible d'une synthèse philosophique d'ordre transcendant ou abstrait. Les conceptions que représentent les Symboles de la Maçonnerie ne peuvent donner lieu à aucun enseignement dogmatique; elles échappent aux formules concrètes du langage parlé et ne se laissent point traduire par des mots. Ce sont, comme on dit très justement, des Mystères qui se dérobent à la curiosité profane, c'est-à-dire des Vérités que l'esprit ne peut saisir qu'après y avoir été

> judicieusement préparé. La préparation à l'intelligence des Mystères est allégoriquement mise en scène dans les initiations maçonniques par les épreuves des trois grades fondamentaux de l'Ordre. Contrairement à ce qu'on s'est imaginé, ces épreuves n'ont aucunement pour objet de faire ressortir le courage ou les qualités morales du récipiendaire; elles figurent un enseignement que le penseur devra discerner, puis méditer au cours de toute sa carrière d'Initié. 83

If Guénon found this definition to be "parfaitement exacte" in its application to Masonry, his Aperçus sur l'Initiation states categorically that an exhaustive definition for all forms of initiation would be impossible, "la nature même du sujet s'opposant à toute délimitation rigoureuse" (AI, p. 7).

Guénon sees a tenuous relationship, if any at all, between initiation and "mysticism". The latter, at least as it has been used in Occidental jargon since the Middle Ages, designates a fundamental passivity in the face of hoped-for signs of a "supernatural" order; on the other hand, "dans tout ce qui se rapporte à l'initiation, il n'y a en réalité rien de vague ni de nébuleux, mais au contraire des choses très précises et très 'positives'; ... en fait, l'initiation est, par sa nature même, proprement incompatible avec le mysticisme" (AI, p. 15). The difference between the two is similar to that between prayer and incantation, for while prayer is first and foremost "une demande" which supposes the existence of "quelque chose d'extérieur", incantation is the aspiration to the "Universal", in the hope of obtaining "une illumination intérieure" (AI, p. 173). Thus mystic "union", giving more than its share of importance to individuality, is a relative, exterior state. The mystics, states Guénon, have never conceived of the possibility of Supreme Identity: "ils s'arrêtent à la 'vision', et toute l'étendue des mondes angéliques les sépare encore de la Délivrance."[84]

The first condition of initiation--that of a certain "natural disposition" or aptitude--is the only element it shares with what is loosely termed "mysticism", for the mystic, too, needs a special disposition, although his is one of fundamental passivity. Thus in the mystic's case there is no possibility of direct or personal effort, while initiation, by its active, intellective nature, must help the individual in his voyage "de la 'puissance' à 'l'acte', qui est proprement la 'réalisation'" (AI, p. 30). In this sense, it is impossible to "initiate oneself", for this is a contradiction in terms; initium signifies "entry" or "beginning", and all traditions agree in designating it as a rebirth; at least in light of present human circumstances, Man cannot accomplish this alone. Guénon's explanation sheds further light on his vision of the Primordial Tradition, when Man's possibilities were infinitely greater:

> Nous ne sommes pas à l'époque primordiale où tous les hommes possédaient normalement et spontanément un état qui est auhourd'hui attaché à un haut degré d'initiation; et d'ailleurs, à vrai dire, le mot même d'initiation,

> dans une telle époque, ne pouvait avoir aucun sens. Nous sommes dans le Kali-Yuga, c'est-à-dire dans un temps où la connaissance spirituelle est devenue cachée, et où quelques-uns seulement peuvent encore l'atteindre, pourvu qu'ils se placent dans les conditions voulues pour l'obtenir (AI, pp. 31-32).

Man, in the clutches of the "fatal cycle" of the present world, may rejoin the Primordial Tradition through initiation, which implies three successive conditions corresponding respectively to the terms "potentiality", "virtuality", and "actuality". One must first be qualified, or "initiable"; this qualification depends on certain possibilities inherent to the nature of the individual involved, the materia prima which will act as the basis of initiatic revelation. In the second place, the aspiring initiate must submit to a higher influence. This condition takes the form of "la transmission, par le moyen du rattachement à une organisation traditionnelle, d'une influence spirituelle donnant à l'être 'l'illumination' qui lui permettra d'ordonner et de développer ces possibilités qu'il porte en lui" (AI, p. 34). Finally, the aspirant must learn to "embody" the Light he has glimpsed through a personal intellective effort, "...faisant passer l'être, d'échelon en échelon, à travers les différents degrés de la hiérarchie initiatique, pour le conduire au but final de la 'Délivrance' ou de 'l'Identité Suprême'" (AI, p. 34). Attachment to a regular traditional organisation is not only a necessary condition of initiation; Guénon believes that it constitutes initiation in its strictest

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sense--i.e., that of a second birth, a regeneration. It is a rebirth in that it allows the individual entry into a world other than that of his physical modalities, a world "qui sera pour lui le champ de développements de possibilités d'un ordre supérieur." It is a regeneration in that it re-establishes the individual in a primeval state, "...dans les prérogatives qui étaient naturelles et normales aux premiers âges de l'humanité, alors que celle-ci ne s'était pas encore éloignée de la spiritualité originelle..." (AI, p. 35). Certain incontestably initiatic organizations existed in the Middle Ages and found their basis in Catholicism: the Fidèles d'Amour, the Rose-Croix, the Templars and the Masons. The organizations were not heretical, although the accusation was levelled at them as a pretext

> par un pouvoir politique pour ruiner des adversaires qu'il estimait d'autant plus redoutables qu'ils étaient plus difficiles à atteindre par les moyens ordinaires; la destruction de l'Ordre du Temple en est l'exemple le plus célèbre.[85]

In La crise du monde moderne (1927), Guénon had shown that all properly historical organizations had fallen under the fatal influence of the Kali-Yuga, the fourth or "dark" age of the human cycle in Hindu doctrine. Already said to date back more than six milennia, the Kali-Yuga effectively precedes classical history; when it ends, the human cycle will have ended. Until it ends, however, Man in his individual state will continue on his present course unless he is able, through initiation, to transcend his state via a certain intellective knowledge:

> Si le trésor de la sagesse 'non-humaine', antérieure à tous les âges, ne peut jamais se perdre, il s'enveloppe de voiles de plus en plus impénétrables, qui le dissimulent aux regards et sous lesquels il est extrêmement difficile de le découvrir. C'est pourquoi il est partout question, sous des symboles divers, de quelque chose qui a été perdu, en apparence tout au moins et par rapport au monde extérieur, et que doivent retrouver ceux qui aspirent à la véritable connaissance; mais il est dit aussi que ce qui est ainsi caché redeviendra visible à la fin de ce cycle, qui sera en même temps, en vertu de la continuité qui relie toutes choses entre elles, le commencement d'un cycle nouveau. 86

CONCLUSIONS

Le Symbolisme de la Croix is a careful exposition, based on evidence furnished by traditional symbols, of the multiple states of being; the most clearly recognizable representation of these multiple states is the being envisaged in its human aspect: a man or a woman. Situated among other states of manifested and non-manifested being, the human state is present in a hierarchy of degrees of Existence, which in its capitalized form signifies the sum of all states of being as reflected in a certain unifying principle known to Man as God. By his nature, then, Man is merely one degree of Existence, and this degree confers upon him neither superiority nor inferiority in any absolute sense:

> Si nous devons parfois envisager particulièrement cet état, c'est ... uniquement parce que, étant celui dans lequel nous nous trouvons en fait, il acquiert par là pour nous, mais pour nous seulement, une importance spéciale. 87

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Thus in speaking of all other forms or states of being, superior or inferior to ours, we take our human state as a necessary, unavoidable term of comparison, so as to establish, in our understanding, the hierarchy which exists between all states of being in the face of Existence. In expressing this hierarchy, in recognizing the facets of our human state, and in comparing this state with others, Guénon states, "nous ne pouvons le faire qu'en descendant à un tout autre ordre, essentiellement relatif et limité, pour les traduire dans le langage qui est celui des individualités humaines."[88] Human language, then, is essentially a process-often mediocre--of translation; it is inevitably imperfect, says Guénon, as well as manifestly inadequate. Yet while he finds fault with all forms of human expression, Guénon believes that properly symbolic representations, with the "non-human" essence they incarnate, are "incomparablement moins étroitement bornées que le langage ordinaire, et par conséquent plus aptes à la communication des vérités transcendantes."[89] Yet while symbolic expression is the best form of language, it is fitting to preserve the sanctity of certain higher truths by reserving for them "la part de l'inexprimable."

In its final form, then, Guénon's doctrine became (had to become) unacceptable to the Church, whose "keepers of the Faith" could not generally recognize the existence of a purely metaphysical, symbolic domain. Had it done so, the Church would logically have had to relinquish its ferociously exercised jurisdiction. Guénon's doctrine was also unacceptable to the proponents of Masonry, which since the eighteenth century had abandoned pure metaphysics in favor of an ideal of material progress. We have already tried to show that philosophy, by its discursive nature, could not accept his doctrine without questioning certain of its most fundamental principles and finding them wanting in "proof".

Guénon's work is the careful staging of an ideal construction; parts of its structure are occupied by people--what he calls Ordinary Man--some of whom have the possibility of transcending themselves in the hope of perceiving the natural principle of the ideal structure: Divine Unity. In any case, any human protagonists in Guénon's epic must play a primarily intellective role; as has been pointed out,[90] Guénon's doctrine leads to a kind of Abstract Church, much as Guénon would have recoiled at either term. At any rate, each of the fundamental pillars of the Catholic Church is replaced by an exclusively intellectual principle. Thus, to simplify slightly, Guénon's God is Metaphysics (i.e., the Universal Principle); his faith, Knowledge; his revelation, Tradition; his sacrament, Initiation. The Church will even have its highest human authority, its Universal Legislator, whose name is Manu (Hindu), Mina and Ménès (Egyptian), Menu (Celtic), and Minos (Greek). Yet He must remain invisible during this, the darkest of all human cycles, the *Kali-Yuga*. Guénon has named Him: *Le Roi du Monde*.

Guénon's "harmonious edifice" is based on one fundamental law, the law of correspondence, in which he has said, true symbolism, far from being a human invention, is primeval and lives on in nature itself; indeed, "la nature tout entière n'est qu'un symbole des réalités transcendantes" (*SC*, pp. 82-83). The historical signs taken by Guénon to provide the armature of his "harmonious edifice" are consequences, in all cases, of the Primordial Tradition. As such, they are properly primeval (traditional) symbols, for, proceeding from a single metaphysical principle from which they obtain the totality of their reality, they translate or express that principle, each in its own manner and according to the order of existence which it represents. Thus all traditional symbols correspond to each other in their deepest sense, and contribute to our perception of a certain "Universal Harmony" which is a reflection of primordial Unity.

In his first full-length study dealing with Hindu doctrine, Guénon makes clear the distinction and affinities which exist in his works between the exoteric and esoteric aspects of a doctrine, the first being more exterior, and the second more interior:

> L'exotérisme, comprenant ce qui était plus élémentaire, plus facilement compréhensible, et par conséquent susceptible d'être mis plus largement à la portée de tous, *s'exprime seul dans l'enseignement écrit*, tel qu'il nous est parvenu plus ou moins complètement; l'ésotérisme, plus approfondi et d'un ordre plus élevé, et s'adressant comme tel aux seuls disciples réguliers de l'école, préparés tout spécialement à le comprendre, *n'était l'objet que d'un enseignement purement oral*, sur la nature duquel il n'a évidemment pas pu être conservé de données bien précises. [91]

Ideally, the same doctrine is involved in both cases, though each has its own distinguishing characteristics; both are degrees of teaching or revelation, and can in no way, Guénon believes, be opposed or contradictory; indeed, they are complementaries, for esoterism, giving a deeper sense to the exoteric mode, develops and completes it. The bridge most natural (most *human*, one would say) between the two modes is the symbol.

The signs we have studied here are always consequences of their symbols. The symbol, then, is itself perennial, having preceded, in a sense, our notions of historical fact. Hence the acceptance of a symbolic sense, rather than obviating a historical one, merely precedes it. This is especially true, Guénon believes, of what he has called "sacred history". In the particular case of the cross, he shows that it did not wait for Christ in order to "become" a traditional symbol. The cross even then possessed a fundamentally symbolic value, accepted by all traditions, and being a part of Primeval Man's scheme in ordering his life according to the armature which controls and gives form to all manifested and non-manifested existence. In the case of the Christian event, then, its historical significance is merely derived from its already established symbolic value. As such, the symbolic sense very nearly precedes history itself, difficult as this may be to envision. At any rate, the symbol must necessarily precede language--indeed, Guénon tries to show that, in a very important sense, the symbol *creates* language, for it becomes, in his words, "le langage initiatique par excellence, le véhicule indispensable de tout enseignement traditionnel" (*SC*, p. 53).

In setting up a supreme paradigm such as the notion of Universal Man, Guénon's doctrinal studies are rooted in the earthly reflection of the paradigm: Ordinary Man, who is neither good nor evil in absolute terms, but who simply occupies one of the myriad states of being in the hierarchy of existence. Thus Guénon's most immediate subject of study is Man's possibilities of transcending his state and reaching a certain harmonious "oneness" with his universal, ideal counterpart, known variously as the Supreme Center, Absolute Unity, or Transcendent Man. The natural vehicle of this doctrine is metaphysics, which is based on the fundamentally inexpressible elements of the Primordial Tradition. It is absurd, for example, to speak of a phenomenon as "pre-dating time", or to say that there was "a time" when "there was no time". In his work, then, Guénon conceives of "traditional" metaphysics (a pleonasm) as expressed primarily, if not exclusively, in a symbolic mode. Metaphysics, in his understanding of the term, being based on the fundamentally inexpressible, a doctrine attempting to enunciate it can only suggest it through the use of appropriate images, which will function as the tangible basis of that which is subjectively known as meditation. His doctrine, then, takes a necessarily symbolic form itself, for the symbol, he has pointed out, has its roots in the very nature of things and of beings, is in perfect harmony with the laws of this nature, and natural laws themselves are the expression and the exteriorisation, as it were, of divine or principial will. Philosophy, by its essentially discursive nature, depends entirely on the exoteric mode to render its meaning. Symbolic expression, which is fundamentally poetic in nature, goes a major step further, for it has no properly historical origin, and presumes a certain non-verbal gnosis or cognitive superior knowledge.

Operating in the two senses of Amplitude and Exaltation, the symbol of the cross represents the perfect balance between all states of Existence; the terms express a simultaneous unfolding of Being, which takes place horizontally (Amplitude) to denote the degrees of determined existence, and vertically

(Exaltation) to denote the hierarchy of levels of Being, hierarchy in which Man in the "ordinary" sense of the term cannot be considered a privileged or well-placed member unless he has developed, in Guénon's terms, the "possibilities of his existence".

The cross as symbol is the union of the two primordial qualities of activity and passivity, as the two terms are embodied in the primeval Androgyne, which contains both the masculine and feminine principles. The axes of the cross are, respectively, active or vertical, and passive or horizontal. The amplification of the two-dimensional cross into its three-dimensional extension makes room, so to speak, for all traditional symbols, making it possible for Guénon to show further the essential correspondences which exist between them. Indeed, it is mainly through the use of spatial, geometric symbols that he relates the basic forms of his symbolic universe, his commentary showing the major common points and pointing to itself on numerous occasions as the least insufficient (albeit mediocre) frame of reference.

The Taoist symbol of the yin-yang is considered by Guénon to be the most striking example of cruciform symbolism in the Oriental world. It is intimately related to the three-dimensional cross, which "creates" the sphere containing universal possibility. As such, the yin-yang, tracing the circle of individual destiny, evokes the primeval Androgyne in its deepest sense, for it is at once the feminine and masculine principles, embodying all notions of passive-active and horizontal-vertical in its union of complementaries. Symbolising Man, the two figures (cross and yin-yang) point to his possibilities in the face of the Absolute, for although he is restricted to a certain "freedom" between his birth and his death, Man is free to desire the balance of his total freedom in the perfect harmony which exists at the meeting-place between Amplitude and Exaltation.

As we have seen, Primordial Man in Guénon's vision was essentially androgynous in nature, embodying the perfect harmony represented in the symbol, be it the cross, the Taoist yin-yang, the Vedic Prakriti-Purusha, or the major triads and ternary symbols examined in his later works. This harmonious state, as I have attempted to show, comes to reflect the perfect equilibrium between the two overriding principles of feminine-passive-horizontal and masculine-active-vertical. It is the primordial state referred to by Aristophanes in the strange, almost lighthearted discourse attributed to him in Plato's Symposium. Indeed, there are such striking similarities between this text and Guénon's treatment of Primordial Man that it is even possible to refute the "lack of love" certain members of the Grand Jeu surrealists criticized in Guénon, for it will be remembered that Aristophanes, whose discourse is cited by Guénon (SC, p. 107), "had a mind to praise Love." Plato is worth quoting to capture the power of

Aristophanes' presentation. The text is from Jowett:

> Mankind, he said, judging by their neglect of him, have never, as I think, at all understood the power of Love. ... I will try to describe his power to you, and you shall teach the rest of the world what I am teaching you. In the first place, let me treat of the nature of man and what has happened to it; for the original human nature was not like the present, but different. The sexes were not two as they are now, but originally three in number; there was man, woman, and the union of the two, having a name corresponding to this double nature, which had once a real existence, but is now lost, and the word 'Androgynous' is only preserved as a term of reproach. 92

The myth is especially striking in its vocabulary, and in the ternary which produces the Androgyne. Primeval Man, states Aristophanes, "was round, his back and sides forming a circle." He had two sets of hands and feet, and a single head with two faces, looking in opposite directions. There were three sexes among Primeval Man, according to the influence of the sun, the moon, and the earth. Here again, the Taoist triad is evoked in its deepest sense:

> The man was originally the child of the sun, the woman of the earth, and the man-woman of the moon, which is made up of sun and earth, and they were all round and moved round and round like their parents. Terrible was their might and strength, and the thoughts of their hearts were great, and they made an attack upon the gods. 93

Threatened, the gods decide not to destroy Man, which would end his sacrifices and worship; rather, Zeus will cut the

Androgyne in two, "and they will be diminished in strength and increased in numbers." Bidding Apollo give their heads a turn and heal their terrible wound, Zeus turned the generative organs around to the front, "that by mutual embraces of man and woman they might breed."

All these mythical "facts" naturally lead Aristophanes back to his main subject: the nature of love:

> Human nature was originally one and we were a whole, and the desire and pursuit of the whole is called love. There was a time, I say, when we were one, but now because of the wickedness of mankind God has dispersed us .... wherefore let us exhort all men to piety, that we may avoid evil, and obtain the good, of which Love is to us the lord and minister; .... and I believe that if our loves were perfectly accomplished, and each one returning to his primeval nature had his original true love, then our race would be happy. And if this would be best of all, the best in the next degree and under present circumstances must be the nearest approach to such an union; and that will be the attainment of a congenial love. Wherefore, if we would praise him who has given us this benefit, we must praise the god Love, who is our greatest benefactor, both leading us in this life back to our own nature, and giving us high hopes for the future, for he promises that if we are pious, he will restore us to our original state, and heal us and make us happy and blessed. 94

Man's primordial abode in the "Center of Centers" thus precedes Adam's fall; in "knowing Good from Evil", Primordial Man was separated from unity with the One, for he lost his "sense of eternity" as well as his "sense of unity". A return to the Center restores this primeval state and makes it possible for

Ordinary Man to recover his "sense of the eternal", and to become once again the Androgyne, which is the mirror of Unity. "Pour celui qui se tient au centre, tout est unifié, car il voit tout dans l'unité du Principe" (SC, p. 129).

It is possible to foresee that Guénon's work, containing the kind of elliptical thought which is a mark of genius, and where the movements of an intellectual itinerary are intuitive more often than they are empirical, will not be readily acceptable to the proponents of many forms of thought which are restricted by definition. S.L. Frank, in commenting on his own work, and on Reality and Man (1966) in particular, offers an indictment which may explain Guénon's relatively small following in Europe, and the fact that he is practically unknown in the United States:

> Philosophers and unbelieving thinkers will consider it an illegitimate confusion between independent rational thought and traditional religious faith; theologians and unreflecting believers will regard as illegitimate the very attempt to give a free philosophical interpretation to questions, the only answer to which they find in the authority of the Revelation and traditional church doctrine. It is characteristic of both these camps, and indeed of the whole spiritual atmosphere of our day, to be prejudiced against and reject philosophical thought based upon religious and metaphysical experience. 95

Frank's view is not incompatible with that of Guénon, for their conclusions involve the combination, in Frank's words, "of a sober awareness of the empirical world's imperfection, and therefore of man's tragic position in it, with a metaphysical apprehension of reality as a harmonious all-embracing unity having its primary basis in absolute Spirit and absolute Holiness."[96]

Frithjof Schuon has defined Guénon's work in terms of four major interrelated categories: intellectuality, universality, tradition and theory. Dealing with the nature of true (i.e., supra-rational) knowledge, his work is intellectual. Its universality derives from its treatment of all traditional forms as functions of a single unifying principle. It is essentially traditional in that the fundamental principles it transmits conform strictly to the teachings of the great traditions. Finally, it is a theoretical work in that it acts solely in evoking a certain transcendent intuition, and does not seek to assume a "practical" role.

As a metaphysical doctrine, it exists separately from "philosophy" in the positivistic sense of the term. The systems of positivism presented themselves to the Occidental mind more as ratiocination than as intellective intuition, reducing the latter to a kind of unconscious accident (Aristotle vs. Plato). Guénon shows that modern thought, much in the classical fashion, has forgotten, or wanted to forget, the fundamental distinction which exists between intellectual intuition and mental processes, between intellect, which is universal, and reason, which is individualistic. In the balance lies a certain transcendent quality which the positivistic thinker must deride as mere poetry. Guénon awakens in us a certain intellective faculty which supersedes the need to explain "reasonably" those realities which it is not possible for us to "see"; his language does away with hypotheses, calculations, conclusions, and restores to pure metaphysics its proper place, beside the poetry whose "dialectic", if it has one, is the child of analogy and symbol. Much like this poetry, metaphysical doctrine is a science of reality and illusion--a gentle sleight of hand, in which the inner eye is trained to see more clearly than the outer, erecting cathedrals out of the clouds of Man's primeval dreams. This science of reality and illusion finds its expression, in Guénon's as well as the poet's work, in the symbol, natural for its existence in the nature of things, and universal for its unlimited applications in all orders of reality. The symbol's advantage over ratiocination, according to Schuon, is twofold: far from artificially opposing that which it expresses, it is an incarnation of it; furthermore, instead of suggesting merely one aspect of Reality, it points to a certain universal correspondence in which certain fundamental realities become truly dimensionless.[97] In this sense, Guénon's major role was not to invent, nor even to readapt, but to transmit and comment upon a body of incontrovertible evidence that the best in Man is indeed the mirror of a transcendent order. "Je n'ai pas d'autre mérite," he once wrote a friend, "que d'avoir exprimé de mon mieux quelques idées traditionnelles."[98]

CHAPTER TWO: PART TWO

NOTES

NOTES

1. La Gnose (March, 1910). Italics mine. All of Guénon's writings in this review were signed "Palingénius".

2. René Guénon, "Le Démiurge," La Gnose (1909); reprinted in Etudes Traditionnelles (June, 1951).

3. Nahash, a Hebrew word meaning "serpent". was the name of the first husband of Jesse's wife (II Sam. XVII.25), and a king of the Ammonites, defeated by Saul (I Sam. XI.1,2; XII.12). The serpent in Genesis is not referred to as Nahash, but compare its words (Gen. III.5): "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," and the following (I Sam. XI.2): "And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel." Kadmon, used eponymously, may refer to the Kadmonites, a Canaanite tribe known as "the Easterns". See Gen. XV.18,19: "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites..." Kadmon would be the accusative form of the proper name Kadmos (Cadmus), a Tyrian, in Greek mythology, who, requesting the oracle at Delphi to assist him in rescuing his sister Europa from the clutches of Zeus, is directed to build the city of Thebes. Beginning his task by erecting the Cadmeia (the center of ancient Thebes), Cadmus kills a serpent which was obstructing the progress of the construction. Athena, Goddess of Wisdom, advises Cadmus to take the teeth of the serpent and sow them; this he does, and from the teeth grow the Spartoi, armed warriors who will defend the city. Cadmus is said to have introduced the Greek alphabet. On his death, he turned into a serpent, and was worshipped as such.

4. Guénon, "Le Démiurge."

5. René Guénon, "Sédir et les doctrines hindoues," Le Voile d'Isis (April, 1926), p. 240.

6. All later works were published posthumously.

7. Paul Chacornac, La Vie simple de René Guénon (Paris, 1958), p. 41.

8. André Préau, in Jayakarnataka (April, 1934), quoted by Chacornac, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

9. René Guénon, Le Symbolisme de la Croix (Paris, Editions Véga, 1931, 1950, 1957). All page references are from latest edition: "Collection 10-18," 1970. This work is hereafter cited as SC.

10. Guénon has warned against those who would use the techniques of synthesis only to prove a syncretism: "Ils n'ont aucune conscience de ce qui est d'un autre ordre, et comme ils ne veulent ou ne peuvent admettre que certaines choses leur échappent, ils cherchent naturellement à tout ramener aux procédés qui sont à la portée de leur propre compréhension " [Aperçus sur l'Initiation (Paris, 1946), p. 45].

11. Again in Aperçus sur l'Initiation, p. 44, Guénon warns against imitating certain specialists in the so-called "science of religions," who, employing a critical method, juxtapose elements which are "de provenances diverses, rassemblés du dehors, pour ainsi dire, sans qu'aucun principe d'ordre plus profond vienne les unifier."

12. Thus certain myths involve figures which are relative to the movement of the stars, "parce que les lois de ce mouvement traduisent physiquement les principes métaphysiques dont elles dépendent" (SC, p. 50).

13. See René Guénon, Symboles fondamentaux de la Science sacrée (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), especially "La Montagne et la Caverne," pp. 223-226, and "Les Symboles de l'Analogie," pp. 319-323.

14. SC., p. 68. Guénon discusses this more fully in L'Homme et son devenir selon le Vêdântâ (Paris, 1925), citing texts from the Upanishads and Scripture where the image is used.

15. "Transformation" is used by Guénon as meaning "passage au-delà de la forme, donc au-delà de tout ce qui appartient à l'ordre des existences individuelles."

16. Aperçus sur l'Initiation (Paris, 1946), p. 49.

17. Ibid., p. 131.

18. Ibid., p. 135.

19. Guénon cites the late eighteenth century "solar myth" of Dupuis and Volney; their main thesis consisted in giving the cross an exclusively astronomical interpretation.

20. Guénon quotes an unidentified Muslim priest as having said, in this context: "Si les Chrétiens ont le signe de la Croix, les Musulmans en ont la doctrine."

21. Amplitude and Exaltation are terms denoting the divine archetype in Sufi doctrine: السعة و التجليل
The term Amplitude, sometimes referred to as "the width of the heart" (سعة القلب) is the necessary condition for the attainment of Exaltation. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, in his Ideals and Realities of Islam (London: Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1966), refers to the union of these two primordial directions as the constitutive element of the Tariqah (الطريقة), or "Spiritual Path," known in Islamic studies as Tasawwuf (التصوف) or Sufism. This is, Nasr states (p. 121), "the inner and esoteric dimension of Islam and ... has its roots in the Quran and prophetic practice. Being the heart of the Islamic message it, like the physical heart, is hidden from external view, although again like the heart it is the inner source of life and the centre which coordinates inwardly the whole religious organism of Islam."

Nasr, in the same work, notes that the Prophet Muhammad "was both the exoteric and esoteric source of the revelation but in his function as revealer of Divine legislation he represents the exoteric aspect. After him there must be those who inherited his esoteric function and whose duty it is to expound the inner meaning of the Divine Law" (pp. 160-161). El-Hindi's Epistle (الهندي - رسالة في تجلي النبي محمد - صلعم), extant only in Arabic, attempts to reveal this esoteric function.

22. The number is the sum of the numerical values, assigned to the Koran, to the letters forming the words Adam wa Hawa, which is equivalent to the value of Allah and equals 66 (آدم وحواء = الله).

23. "And when We said unto the angels: Prostrate yourselves before Adam, they fell prostrate, all save Iblis [Lucifer]. He demurred through pride, and so became a disbeliever."

(Koran II, 34)

وإذ قلنا للملائكة اسجدوا لآدم فسجدوا
إلا إبليس أبى و استكبر وكان من الكافرين.

"And when We said unto the angels: Fall down prostrate before Adam and they fell prostrate, all save Iblis, he said: Shall I fall prostrate before that which Thou hast created of clay?"

(Koran XVII, 61)

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا
إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ قَالَ أَسْجُدُ لِمَنْ خَلَقْتَ طِيناً

"And [remember] when We said unto the angels: Fall prostrate before Adam, and they fell prostrate, all save Iblis. He was of the Jinn, so he rebelled against the Lord's command. Will ye choose him and his seed for your protecting friends instead of Me, when they are an enemy unto you? Calamitous is the exchange for evil-doers!" (Koran XVIII, 50). Satan is of the Jinn, not of the Malak (angels). This explains his disobedience, for Jinn, like mortals, may determine their own conduct.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا
إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ كَانَ مِنَ الْجِنِّ فَفَسَقَ عَنْ
أَمْرِ رَبِّهِ وَذُرِّيَّتَهُ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِي وَهُمْ .
لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ بِئْسَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ بَدَلاً .

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24. P. Vulliaud, La Kabbale juive (Paris, n.d.), Vol. I, pp. 215-216; in SC, p. 83.

25. Sepher Ietsirah (IV, 5).

26. Siphra di-Tseniutha (II, 176b).

27. Guénon indicates that the final milennium, that corresponding to the Sabbath, is mentioned in the Apocalypse as the "reign of a thousand years".

28. Any spatial (geometric) projection of the "simple" cross will show this.

29. The Androgyne would be the perfect "manifested" example of this union, for it embodies both metaphysical ideas and physical attributes.

30. Guénon cites the generally ignored symbolic value of the speech assigned to Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*. There are important similarities here with the *yin-yang* symbol in Taoist doctrine.

31. In Islamic tradition, Guénon notes that this complementarism is symbolised by the first two letters of the Arabic alphabet: *Alif* and *Ba* are considered as masculine and feminine respectively. The form of the first being a vertical line, and that of the second a horizontal, their union is a cross.

32. This notion of the *point central* has been examined in detail by André Breton, and will be taken up in this study in Chapter III. See also Michel Carrouges, *André Breton et les données fondamentales du Surréalisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), pp. 20-39. Carrouges states (p. 20): "La notion du point suprême est la pierre d'angle fondamentale de la cosmologie surréaliste, elle est le foyer vivant du réel et du surréel et elle vient de l'ésotérisme." The "Central Point" (نقطة المركز), in Islamic esoterism, is the locus of the "Great Peace", which is *Es-Sakinah* (السكينة). The term, roughly translated, is "the peace which comes from the reassurance that the subject is one with the Lord." It appears as follows in the Koran, and is a fundamental goal of Sufi doctrine: "Lo! the token of his kingdom is that there shall come unto you the ark wherein is *peace of reassurance* from your Lord..." (Koran II, 248).

إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ ٱلتَّابُوتُ
فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ مِن رَبِّكُمْ .

"He it is Who sent down *peace of reassurance* into the hearts of the believers that they might add faith unto their faith." (Koran XLVIII, 4.)

هُوَ ٱلَّذِي أَنزَلَ ٱلسَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ
ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا .

"And He [Allah] knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down Peace of reassurance on them, and hath rewarded them with a near victory..." (Koran XLVIII, 18).

فَعَلِمَ ما في قُلُوبِهِم فَأَنزَلَ ٱلسَّكِينَةَ
عَلَيْهِم وأَثابَهُمْ فَتحاً قَرِيباً .

33. *SC*, pp. 123-128. See *Luke* XVIII, 17, and *Matthew* XI, 25.

34. In considering this "end" in relation to the traditional "cosmic Wheel," Guénon notes that all movement is inversely proportionate to the attainment of the central point. "Movement" taken as a figure of thought, also implies the extinction of purely rational (i.e., *reasoning*) awareness of dogma in the attempt to become reintegrated in the primeval Godhead. In *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, S.H. Nasr writes (p. 77): "The unlettered nature of the Prophet means most of all the extinction of all that is human before the Divine. The soul of the Prophet was a *tabula rasa* before the Divine pen and on the human level his quality of 'unletteredness' [أُمِّيَّة] marks that supreme virtue of realizing the Truth through the contemplation of it which marks an 'extinction' in the metaphysical sense before the Truth. Only through this extinction (*fana'*) [فناء] can one hope to enter into life with God and subsistence in Him (*baqa'*) [بقاء]."

35. This notion is treated fully in Guénon's *Le Roi du Monde* (Paris, 1927), chapters V and IX, as well as in *Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel* (Paris, 1929), chapters V and VIII.

36. See *Genesis*: II, 9 and III, 3.

37. See *Genesis*: III, 22.

38. Guénon notes (*SC*, p. 144) that the fig tree is the Hindu symbol of the Tree of the World; it is the oak of the Celts, the German linden, and the Scandinavian ash. In an essentially psychoanalytic form of research, Theodor Reik has examined the symbolic implications of the Fall from Eden in his *Myth and Guilt* (New York: G. Braziller, Inc., 1957). Man, having lost grace by eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree, will attempt to regain his primeval and privileged rank by ascending the Tree of Knowledge itself. Reik affirms, by this figure of thought, that "Man is a moral climber" (p. 422). A result of guilt, moral climbing "denotes

analogously a person who tries to live beyond his moral standard and makes energetic, sometimes even desperate efforts to mount to a moral position that is too high, compared with his means and abilities" (p. 423).

39. See *Bhagavad-Gîta* XV, I; in *L'Homme et son devenir selon le Vêdântâ* (Paris, 1925), p. 53. Reik concludes as follows in *Myth and Guilt* (p. 429): "Religion is far from telling nothing but the truth, and it is farther from telling the whole truth. There is, however, some truth in the Fall myth that warns man he should not think of himself as godlike. A German proverb says that trees do not grow into heaven. We would add, with the exception of the giant world trees in various ancient mythologies. But those are really gods, totemistic tree gods."

40. All but the last edition of this work were added to by Guénon, usually in footnotes. This particular comment was added in the second edition of *SC* (Paris, 1950): "Nous laissons entièrement de côté, cela va sans dire, l'usage tout artificiel et même antitraditionnel du *swastika* par les racistes allemands qui, sous l'appellation fantaisiste et quelque peu ridicule de *hakenkreuz* ou 'croix à crochets', en firent très arbitrairement un signe d'antisémitisme, sous prétexte que cet emblème aurait été propre à la soi-disant 'race âryenne', alors que c'est au contraire ... un symbole réellement universel."

41. G. Grandidier, "Les Indiens de l'isthme de Panama," *Journal des Débats* (January 22, 1929). Quoted by Guénon.

42. Guénon notes that these "ideographs" were produced in multiple combinations, using different colored threads.

43. "Reflected" here evokes a rare moment of excitement in Guénon, who notes in a footnote: "Le double sens du mot 'réflexion' est ici très digne de remarque."

44. Translation mine. Guénon notes the perfect analogy to this concept, as seen in Taoist doctrine, in the act of respiration: "l'inspiration active répondant à la vie, l'expiration passive répondant à la mort, la fin de l'une étant ... le commencement de l'autre."

45. Mohyiddin Ibn-Arabi, *El-Futûhâtul-Mekkiyah* (محيي الدّين ابن عربي - الفتوحات المكيّة); in *SC*, pp. 184-185.

46. "Milieu" here taken to signify both "center" and "atmosphere" in the figurative sense.

47. See *Exodus* (III, 14).

48. Matgioï (pseud. of Albert de Pouvourville), *La Voie Métaphysique* (Paris, n.d.), p. 129; in *SC*, p. 237.

49. Matgioï, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-132; in *SC*, p. 239.

50. The notion, states Guénon, "exclut formellement la possibilité de la 'réincarnation'."

51. Matgioï, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-133; in *SC*, p. 241.

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-138; in *SC*, p. 247.

53. *Tchoang-tseu*, chapter XXV; in *SC*, p. 250.

54. Guénon bases much of this analysis on the work of Pouvourville and Champrenaud (Gnostic pseudonyms, respectively, are "Simon," and "Théophane"): their *Enseignements secrets de la Gnose* is treated at length in *SC*, chapter XXIV.

55. Sufi doctrine and practice, based on the life of Muhammad, has its foundation in the Koran itself, which calls for *islam* (إسلام), or *Surrender*, *iman* (إيمان), or *Faith*, and *ihsan* (إحسان), or *Virtue*. In *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, S.H. Nasr writes (p. 134): "*Iman* is essentially faith in Divine Unity and *islam* submission to the Divine Will. *Ihsan* operates upon these two fundamental elements of the religion and transforms them into what is known as *Tasawwuf* [تَصَوُّف]. In fact, the Sufi masters have over the ages defined Sufism by the well-known *Hadith* [حديث : observation] of the Prophet who when asked about the definition of *ihsan* said: '*Ihsan* is to adore Allah as though thou didst see him, and if thou does not see him he nonetheless sees thee'."
(الإحسان أن تَعبد الله كأنَّك تَراه فإن لَم تَكن تَراه فإنَّهُ يَراك)
When this "seeing" becomes simultaneous and mutual, the true *gnosis* of the Sufi vision takes place. Then and only then is it said to the believer: "Now we have removed from thee thy covering, and piercing is thy sight this day" (Koran L, 22). (فَكَشَفنا عَنكَ غطاءَكَ ، فَبَصَرُكَ اليومَ حديدٌ)

56. Shankarâcharya was the first Hindu visionary to have discarded all notions of duality in the Vedic writings, and to have related them to a concept of absolute unity. See Nikhilananda's commentary of the *Upanishads* (New York, 1962).

57. This most ancient of Hermetic symbols evokes the first principle of the Emerald Table of Hermes Trismegistos,

and is one of the major symbols of the Cabbala.

58. The "Science of Numbers," or mnemotechnic process, is one of the keys to Islamic esoterism.

59. Zacharie Tourneur and Didier Anzieu, in their edition of Pascal's Pensées (Paris: Armand Colin, 1960), note (p. 139) that this traditional formula, which expresses "le caractère purement intelligible de la toute-puissance divine," appears in Mlle. de Gournay's preface to Montaigne's Essais, published in 1635, and is attributed to Hermes Trismegistos. The pensée in question (No. 197) is as follows: "Tout ce monde visible n'est qu'un trait imperceptible dans l'ample sein de la Nature. Nulle idée n'en approche; nous avons beau enfler nos conceptions au-delà des espaces imaginables, nous n'enfantons que des atomes, au prix de la réalité des choses. C'est une sphère infinie, dont le centre est partout, la circonférence nulle part."

C.G. Jung, in his Psychology & Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), attributes this notion to Augustine, but gives no source for the following (p. 66): "Deus est figura intellectualis, cujus centrum est ubique, circumferentia vero nusquam" ("God is an intellectual figure, whose center is everywhere, the circumference in truth nowhere"). The Deity has traditionally been perceived in terms of the circle. Jung writes (p. 67): "The image of the circle--regarded as the most perfect form since Plato's Timaeus, the prime authority of Hermetic philosophy--was also given to the most perfect substance, to the gold, to the anima mundi or anima media natura, and to the first created light. And because the macrocosm, the Great World, was made by the creator 'in forma rotunda et globosa' (Plato, Timaeus, XVII), the smallest part of the whole, the point, also contains this perfect nature."

In "The Library of Babel," Jorge Luis Borges writes of the universe as a library, "composed of an indefinite and perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries," and which "exists ab aeterno." Ordinary man is characterized as an imperfect librarian, who "may be the product of chance or of malevolent demiurgi." The Library, however, "can only be the work of a God." The great hope expressed by Borges in this essentially Hermetic work, much in keeping with Guenon's vision before him, is to "become" Universal Man, whom he here names the "eternal traveler." Thus: "The Library is unlimited and cyclical. If an eternal traveler were to cross it in any direction, after centuries he would see that the same volumes were repeated in the same disorder (which, thus repeated, would be an order: the

Order). My solitude is gladdened by this elegant hope." Modulating on Pascal's celebrated *dictum*, Borges writes that the Universe-Library "is a sphere whose exact center is in any one of its hexagons and whose circumference is inaccessible." See Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths*, eds. and tr. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions, 1962), pp. 51-58. In his preface to this collection of what could be called "narrative poems," André Maurois relates that Borges had tracked down Pascal's metaphor to Giordano Bruno (1584), who wrote: "We can assert with certainty that the universe is all center, or that the center of the universe is everywhere and its circumference nowhere." Bruno in turn had read the twelfth century French theologian Alain de Lille, who based his definition upon the *Corpus Hermeticum*: "God is an intelligible sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." The precise order of center and circumference in this ancient metaphor, although it seems to preoccupy Guénon, does not really matter, for it expresses essentially the same hoped-for identity between the domains of Individual and Universal Man in Guénon's writings. "In the beginning of literature is the myth," Borges wrote, "and in the end as well." ("Parable of Cervantes and the *Quixote*," *Labyrinths*, p. 242.)

60. René Guénon, *La Grande Triade* (Paris, 1946; 2nd Edition, 1957), p. 18. All page references are from 1957 edition, hereafter cited as *GT*.

61. The "covering" Sky in the Taoist symbol is identical to the symbolism of the Greek *Ouranos*, which in turn is equivalent to the sanskrit *Varuna*, from the root *var*, "to cover".

62. The linear juxtaposition of the two letters spells *Ab*, which is the Arabic word for "Father". This would serve to complete the ternary symbol.

63. See *Le Règne de la quantité et les signes des temps* (Paris, 1945), chapter XX.

64. The symbolic value of coins in traditional civilizations is treated specifically in *Le Règne de la quantité*, chapter XVI.

65. Citing a passage from Dante's *De Monarchia* (III, 16), Guénon illustrates his point: Dante, in evoking the two beatitudes proposed to Man by God, says they are represented by the Terrestrial Paradise ("la béatitude de cette vie") and the Celestial Paradise ("la béatitude

de la vie eternelle"). Dante adds that the Emperor's duty is to direct men towards the first beatitude, while the Pope's is to lead men to the second.

66. Guénon has used the mnemotechnic process in Hebrew and Arabic to trace the symbolism of fish in traditional thought. See "Les mystères de la lettre Nûn," in Symboles fondamentaux de la Science sacrée (Paris, 1962), pp. 172-176.

67. See also Guénon's Aperçus sur l'Initiation (Paris, 1964), p. 35.

68. Ibid. See also SC, chapter XXVIII and Aperçus sur l'Initiation, chapter XLVI.

69. E.A. Waite, in his introduction to Eliphas Lévi's Transcendental Magic (New York, 1970), p. 27, states that the Emerald Table, "extant only in a late Latin form, ... has been referred to the seventh century." Waite is mistaken, for the Latin is a translation from the Summa Perfectionis of Jâbir ibn Hayyân, an early Muslim esoterist who is believed to have first transcribed the Emerald Table. J.F. Ruska's Tabula Smaragdina (Heidelberg, 1926), is based on this Arabic version. See Titus Burckhardt, Alchemy (London: Stuart and Watkins, 1967), pp. 196-201.

70. SC, chapter XXVIII. The main theme of the I-Ching, which is considered as the common source for Confucian and Taoist doctrine, is the ever-changing nature of all manifested existence. C.G. Jung's foreword to the I-Ching, or Book of Changes, is, he writes, "a testimonial of my individual experience with this great and singular book." The foreword, written for Richard Wilhelm's translation into German of the I-Ching, has been included in the English edition of the work, prepared by Cary F. Baynes, and published as Bollingen Series XXIX, through Pantheon Books, 1956. Jung writes: "The Chinese mind, as I see it at work in the I-Ching, seems to be exclusively preoccupied with the chance aspect of events. What we call coincidence seems to be the chief concern of this peculiar mind, and what we worship as causality passes almost unnoticed.... Theoretical considerations of cause and effect often look pale and dusty in comparison to the practical results of chance." The work is a means to self-knowledge, which the "chance" moment, the particular configuration or arrangement of the three coins or the forty-nine yarrow stalks, Jung writes, "enter into the picture of the moment of observation and form a part of it..." The sixty-four hexagrams of the I-Ching are "the instrument by which the meaning of sixty-four different yet

typical situations can be determined." Jung is characteristically outspoken on Occidental insularity in the face of Taoist esoteric doctrine: "The Chinese standpoint does not concern itself as to the attitude one takes toward the performance of the oracle. It is only we who are puzzled, because we trip time and again over our prejudice, viz., the notion of causality. The ancient wisdom of the East lays stress upon the fact that the intelligent individual realizes his own thoughts, but not in the least upon the way in which he does it. The less one thinks about the theory of the I-Ching, the more soundly one sleeps." See C.G. Jung, Psyche & Symbol, ed. Violet S. de Laszlo (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1958), pp. 225-244.

71. Le Règne de la quantité et les signes des temps, chapter XX.

72. Guénon notes that Lao-tse is cited, although only briefly, in Fabre d'Olivet's Examens des Vers dorés de Pythagore.

73. Fabre d'Olivet, Histoire philosophique du Genre humain: De l'Etat social de l'Homme; in GT, pp. 172-173.

74. Tao-te-king, chapter I; in GT, p. 212.

75. René Guénon, Aperçus sur l'Initiation (Paris, 1946; 2nd edition 1953; 3rd edition 1964), p. 274. All page references are from the third edition, hereafter cited as AI.

76. Guénon, "La Gnose et la Franc-Maçonnerie," La Gnose (March, 1910). Signed "Palingénius."

77. Oswald Wirth, "L'Initiation Maçonnique," L'Initiation (January, 1891). See also Wirth, Le Tarot des imagiers du Moyen Age (Paris, 1927).

78. Ibid.

79. Guénon, Etudes sur la Franc-Maçonnerie (Paris, 1965), p. 261. The "Grand OEuvre" in question is defined by Guénon as "l'accomplissement intégral du Progrès dans tous les domaines de l'activité humaine."

80. Guénon, Le Règne de la quantité et les signes des temps (Paris, 1945).

81. Guénon, "L'Orthodoxie Maçonnique," La Gnose (April, 1910). Signed "Palingénius."

82. *Ibid*.

83. *Rituel interprétatif pour le Grade d'Apprenti*, edited by "Le Groupe Maçonnique d'Etudes Initiatiques," 1893. Cited by Guénon in "L'Orthodoxie Maçonnique," *La Gnose* (April, 1910).

84. Guénon, "Salut et Délivrance," *Etudes Traditionnelles* (January-February, 1950).

85. Guénon, *L'Esotérisme de Dante* (Paris, 1925), p. 8.

86. Guénon, *La Crise du monde moderne* (Paris, 1927), p. 15.

87. Guénon, *Les Etats multiples de l'être* (Paris, 1932), p. 8.

88. *Ibid*.

89. *Ibid*.

90. Paul Sérant, *René Guénon* (Paris, 1958), p. 175.

91. Guénon, *Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues* (Paris, 1921), pp. 133-134. Italics mine.

92. *The Works of Plato* (New York, 1956), p. 353. Edited by Irwin Edman.

93. *Ibid*., p. 354.

94. *Ibid*., pp. 357-358.

95. S.L. Frank, *Reality and Man* (New York, 1966), p. xvii.

96. *Ibid*.

97. Frithjof Schuon, "L'Esprit d'une oeuvre," *Planète plus* (April, 1970), pp. 35-36.

98. *Ibid*., p. 37.

CHAPTER THREE

GUENON AND SOME CONTEMPORARY LITERARY FIGURES

ANTONIN ARTAUD

René Guénon was deeply suspicious of literary activities as authentic means to traditional understanding. Although a number of significant literary figures of his day demonstrated a high degree of interest in his work, Guénon seems to have turned away from what he called les littérateurs definitively a few years before his death. In a history of French literature published in 1949, Henri Clouard devoted the following paragraph to Guénon:

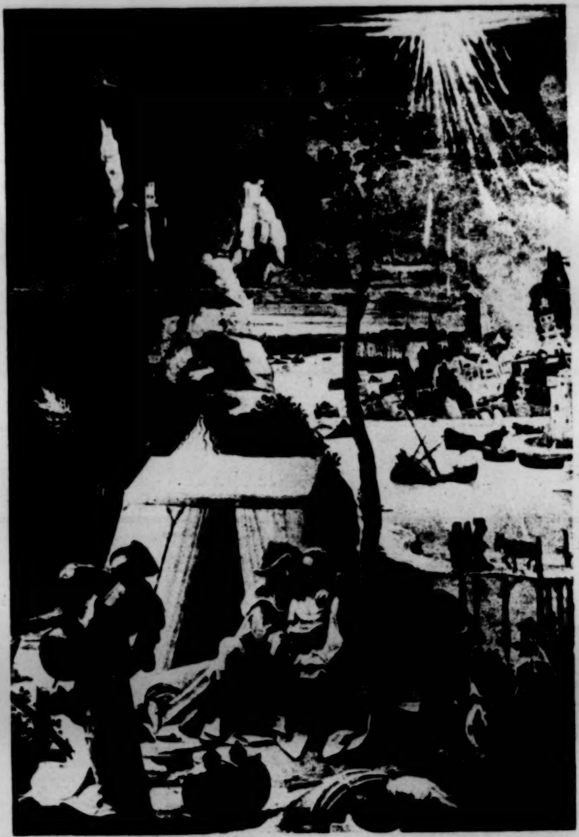
> René Guénon, savant auteur d'une Introduction à l'étude des doctrines hindoues (1921), et qui estime avoir trouvé dans l'Orient de Tagore et même de Gandhi le seul refuge possible d'une intellectualité désintéressée et pure (Orient et Occident, 1924), a construit dans Les Etats multiples de l'être une métaphysique de l'ascension à Dieu par une série d'épurations qui équivaut à une longue expérience mystique. Le lecteur a le droit de se demander si le Dieu de Guénon est autre chose qu'un état subjectif de sérénité; il accepte en tout cas de voir traiter en dangereuses idoles Science et Progrès; il se laisse enseigner une philosophie du détachement. Mais il se rappelle avec scepticisme et mélancolie ces premières années de l'entre-deux-guerres où l'on écoutait l'Allemagne défaite vaticiner sur le déclin de l'Occident, où la traduction du livre anglais de Fernand Ossendowski Bêtes, Hommes et Dieux (1924), faisait fureur, et où l'Europe parut s'abandonner aux rappels pernicieux des pays ancestraux d'Asie, si fidèles à eux-mêmes, si mystérieux et d'où peut toujours surgir à nouveau Gengis-Khan. 1

Guénon's angry reaction to this rather pedestrian piece of reporting was published in Voile d'Isis the same year,[2] and is quite justifiable in the light of Clouard's well-intentioned but inept résumé of Guénon's life-work. In the first place, as Guénon states himself, "nous ne nous sommes jamais occupé que de l'orient traditionnel," and there is absolutely no mention of Tagore or Gandhi in his works. Guénon also rejects Clouard's suggestion that he (Guénon) "constructs" anything, "puisque nous nous sommes toujours borné à exposer de notre mieux les doctrines traditionnelles." As for the Divinity being, as Clouard states, a subjective state of serenity, Guénon writes: "Après que nous avons si souvent expliqué que tout ce qui est 'subjectif' ou 'abstrait' n'a pour nous absolument aucune valeur, comment peut-on bien nous attribuer une pareille absurdité?"

Any of the works mentioned by Clouard, had it been read with a modicum of attention, could have provided the material for a genuine and acceptable entry in Clouard's literary history. As it stands, however, his paragraph betrays the flaccid thinking and gratuitous fantasy which led Guénon to declare that his work "n'a assurément, à aucun point de vue, rien de commun avec la littérature."

Before I turn to the very real influence which René Guénon has exercised on certain literary figures of his day, it should be noted here that Guénon's statement that his work has nothing in common with the activities of literature contradicts a brief but illuminating passage of his, published in Voile d'Isis many years earlier, in 1932. Intended as a review of a short piece by Antonin Artaud, titled La Mise en scène et la Métaphysique,[3] Guénon's words clearly point up his interest in creative activities which are properly within the domain of the poet, and which embody the most fundamental lines of force of traditional doctrine and archetypal thought.

Artaud's stepping-stone is a painting which he had seen at the Louvre, entitled Lot and his Daughters, and painted by Lucas Van den Leyden in 1521 (see next page). While the name of the artist, Artaud holds, "ne sera jamais représentatif d'une période importante de l'histoire de l'art, ... il rend à mon sens inutiles et non avenus les quatre ou cinq cents ans de peinture qui sont venus après lui" (p. 219). Indeed, Artaud sees in this powerful and harmonious work a drama of nature which unfolds as multiple functions of significant and carefully developed relationships "qui existent dans tous les détails du paysage avec le feu du ciel." These details possess what seems to be an autonomous source of light, yet retain correspondences with the covering sky "comme des sortes d'échos ralentis, comme de vivants points de repère nés de lui et placés là pour lui permettre d'exercer toute sa force de destruction." Artaud writes of the artist's description of the sky's fire, finds in it something terrifyingly energetic, "comme un élément encore en action et mobile



Lot und ſeine Töchter (um 1521)
Paris, Louvre

dans une expression immobilisée," holds it to serve, through the violence which it contains, as a spiritual counterbalance to the heavy material stability of the earth: "Il semble que le peintre ait eu connaissance de certains secrets concernant l'harmonie linéaire, et des moyens de la faire agir directement sur le cerveau, comme un réactif physique" (pp. 221-222). This "linear harmony" in turn conspires in Artaud's mind to represent the interpenetration between an archetypal intelligence and an external nature. The single purely social idea in this work of art, to Artaud's mind, is that of sexuality and reproduction:

> Toutes les autres idées sont métaphysiques. Je regrette beaucoup de prononcer ce mot-là, mais c'est leur nom; et je dirai même que leur grandeur poétique, leur efficacité concrète sur nous, vient de ce qu'elles sont métaphysiques, et que leur profondeur spirituelle est inséparable de l'harmonie formelle et extérieure du tableau (p. 222).

These properly metaphysical ideas, Artaud adds, are those of Becomings, of Fatality, of Chaos, and of Equilibrium--the constitutive elements, as we have seen, of archetypal thought. (See Chapter I, Part I.)

Whether or not one "sees" these metaphysical ideas in the painting is not very important here; it is rather Artaud's perceptions that are illuminating, for they lead him to enlarge the sphere of the poetic act, to include what he calls concrete language, "destiné aux sens et indépendant de la parole" (p. 224). It is when expression somehow escapes the boundaries of articulated language that a poetic act is accomplished and gives up the deepest secrets of its meanings. In the domain of theatre, Artaud states (and he means *Occidental* theatre), the creative act is construed in terms of mere *dialogue*, which very often is not destined for the senses and which, by definition, cannot be independent of words. The physical, material, solid language by which theatre may distinguish itself from mere words consists, Artaud writes, "dans tout ce qui occupe la scène, dans tout ce qui peut se manifester et s'exprimer matériellement sur une scène, et qui s'adresse d'abord aux sens au lieu de s'adresser d'abord à l'esprit comme le langage de la parole" (P. 224). The main purpose of this language is to fulfill the senses, and then to develop all of its intellectual consequences at all levels and in all directions. "Cela permet la substitution à la poésie du langage, d'une poésie dans l'espace qui se résoudra justement dans le domaine de ce qui n'appartient pas strictement aux mots" (p. 225). It is in their ideal qualities as forms of metaphysical expression that Artaud conceives the painting and the stage in identical terms. "Ce langage qui évoque à l'esprit des images d'une poésie naturelle (ou spirituelle) intense donne bien l'idée de ce que pourrait être au théatre une poésie dans l'espace indépendante du langage articulé" (p. 226).

This notion of a poetics of space is central to Guénon's studies. By the myriad modalities of his actual, spontaneous, improvised "becomings", the actor on the stage which Artaud imagines resembles Man in Guénon's Symbolisme de la Croix: both seek to embody--the former literally, the latter figuratively--the fullest possibilities of self-realization in terms of the archetype which Guénon had named Universal Man. For Artaud, this archetypal relationship is the only true text, and theatre which subordinates its setting to the "profane" or word-text, is "un théâtre d'idiot, de fou, d'inverti, de grammairien, d'épicier, d'anti-poète et de positiviste, c'est-à-dire d'Occidental." All of these preoccupations, Artaud adds, "puent l'homme invraisemblablement, l'homme provisoire et matériel, et je dirai même l'homme-charogne" (pp. 227-228).

Contemporary theatre, Artaud states, is as human, or individualistic, as it is anti-poetic; having parted ways with true Danger, having lost its sense of the anarchy of laughter, it is condemned to perpetuate a doomed social order, doomed "parce qu'il a rompu avec l'esprit d'anarchie profonde qui est à la base même de toute poésie." Through superficial or profane conventions, Occidental theatre, Artaud believes, has lost that quality of metaphysical fear which he sees as the basis of the Oriental stage, with its silent and mysterious symbolic figures (serpents, dragons) which plant all action firmly in a universal or archetypal context. True theatre, he states, is fundamentally poetic, for "la poésie est anarchique dans la mesure où elle remet en cause toutes les relations d'objet à objet et des formes avec leurs significations. Elle est anarchique aussi dans la mesure où son apparition est la conséquence d'un désordre qui nous rapproche des chaos" (p. 229).

True poetry, Artaud writes, is metaphysical poetry; indeed, "c'est sa portée métaphysique, son degré d'efficacité métaphysique qui en fait tout le véritable prix." With this statement, which seems to have been inspired directly from Guénon, Artaud anticipates the criticism, levelled at him by his contemporaries, that if there is anything which is inhuman, if there is an idea which is "inefficace et morte et qui ne dit que peu de chose, même à l'esprit," it is metaphysics. "Cela tient, comme dit René Guénon," Artaud adds, quoting, "'à notre façon purement Occidentale, à notre facon anti-poétique et tronquée de considérer les principes (en dehors de l'état spirituel énergique et massif qui leur correspond)'" (p. 231).

Guénon's highly favorable review of Artaud's piece contains the following comment on the above statement:

> Nous ne savons pourquoi...on nous a attribué (en la mettant entre guillemets) une phrase que nous n'avons jamais écrite; ce n'est pas que nous ne puissions en approuver l'idée, pour autant que nous la comprenons, mais les termes en lesquels elle est exprimée sont totalement étrangers à notre vocabulaire, et, de plus, nous n'aurions jamais pu dire 'nous' en parlant des Occidentaux. 4

Nonetheless, Artaud's apparently mistaken reference reveals a genuine interest in Guénon's work, and the piece itself is a sensitive and penetrating embodiment of Guénon's studies in the domain of theatre. In the distinctions which Artaud draws between Occidental and Oriental theatre, indeed, are to be found in germ-form the very same distinctions which form the basis of all of Guénon's comparisons between the traditional symbol and its distant modern cousins, between archetypal and historical man, between linear and cyclic time. Artaud writes:

> Dans le théâtre Oriental à tendances métaphysiques opposé au théâtre Occidental à tendances psychologiques, tout cet amas compact de gestes, de signes, d'attitudes, de sonorités, qui constitue le langage de la réalisation et de la scène, ce langage qui développe toutes ses conséquences physiques et poétiques sur tous les plans de la conscience et dans tous les sens, entraîne nécessairement la pensée à prendre des attitudes profondes qui sont ce que l'on pourrait appeler de la métaphysique en activité (p. 231).

This very "real" functioning of Hermetic doctrine, acknowledged by Artaud to be a modality of Guénon's vision, makes of theatre the sphere of a stylized or paradigmatic activity, a representation, literally, of man as a function of sacred correspondences. "Faire la métaphysique du langage, des gestes, des attitudes, du décor, de la musique au point de vue théâtral, c'est, me semble-t-il, les considérer par rapport à toutes les façons qu'ils peuvent avoir de se rencontrer avec le temps et avec le mouvement" (p. 233).

These "extreme poetic consequences" of theatre translate quite exactly as the lines of force which give form and function to Guénon's Universal Man. In Artaud's piece, these consequences are among a very few related to Hermetic doctrine _via Guénon_ by a restricted number of poets of his time. Among André Breton, Henri Bosco, and some members of the _Grand Jeu_ Surrealists, all of whom drew inspiration for their creative acts from Guénon's work, Artaud was the only one, to my knowledge, to have received Guénon's explicit _imprimatur_, in the review of _Voile d'Isis_ cited above. Artaud seems to have dared suggest that language can conceivably express that which Guénon named "l'inexprimable".

> Faire la métaphysique du langage articulé, c'est faire servir le langage à exprimer ce qu'il n'exprime pas d'habitude: c'est s'en servir d'une façon nouvelle, exceptionnelle et inaccoutumée, c'est lui rendre ses possibilités d'ébranlement physique, c'est le diviser et le répartir activement dans l'espace, c'est prendre les intonations d'une manière concrète et leur restituer le pouvoir qu'elles auraient de déchirer et de manifester réellement quelque chose, c'est se retourner contre le langage et ses sources bassement utilitaires, on pourrait dire alimentaires, contre ses origines de bête traquée, c'est enfin considérer le langage sous la forme de l'_Incantation_ (p. 233).

Thus the poetic act, which Artaud makes a necessary ingredient of theatre, if not its _sine qua non_, is conceived by him to mirror the sacred archetypes which he finds still present, though dimly, in his time--notably in Balinese theatre, where "ordinary" activities or situations are made more "real" through the functioning of archetypal figures, fully integrated on the stage.

In defending his use of this admittedly strange "literary" vocabulary, Artaud uses two terms which we have seen several times in this study, and which are replete with the meaning given them by Baudelaire a hundred years before:

> S'il suffit d'ailleurs de prononcer les mots de *religieux* ou de *mystique* pour être confondu avec un sacristain, ou avec un bonze profondément illettré et extérieur de temple boudhique, bon tout au plus à tourner des crécelles physiques de prières, cela juge simplement notre incapacité de tirer d'un mot toutes ses conséquences, et notre ignorance profonde de l'esprit de synthèse et d'analogie (p. 234).

Through a similar sense of synthesis and analogy, Guénon's Universal Man, stationed ultimately at the locus of all planes in the symbol of the three-dimensional cross, comes to evoke the actor-hierophant on Artaud's stage. Through a similar interplay of intuition and intellect the observer may be transformed by a work of art, as Artaud is by Van den Leyden's painting. Both synthesis and analogy conspire in Artaud's *La Mise en scène et la Métaphysique* to give us a clear and concise picture of an artistic medium which must function symbolically to express all its possibilities. "Il est étonnant," writes Guénon, "que le mot de 'symbolisme' ne soit jamais prononcé au cours de cette étude qu'il aurait grandement éclairée, car c'est bien de l'application du symbolisme à l'art théâtral qu'il s'agit: la mise en oeuvre de multiples moyens autres que la parole n'est pas autre chose en réalité."

ANDRE GIDE

André Gide's Journal (1942-1949) reveals that he read several of Guénon's major works and was deeply affected by them. An entry in 1943 reads: "Que serait-il advenu de moi si j'avais rencontré ceux-ci au temps de ma jeunesse, alors que je plongeais dans la Méthode pour arriver à la vie bienheureuse et écoutais les leçons de Fichte, du plus docile que je pouvais?"[5] This question remains unanswered in the Journal, but was fated to come up again in 1947, during a meeting between Gide and Henri Bosco in North Africa.

In a memorial issue of the NRF dedicated to Gide, Bosco published an account of his three brief meetings with Gide.[6] The first two are not noteworthy; the conversation between the two writers is made up of much banter and polite exchanges. Bosco notes his discomfort, and cites Denoël, who reports Gide's impressions of these two uneventful meetings: "Je veux revoir Bosco. J'ai dû lui faire une déplorable impression." The third meeting is arranged, and Denoël, suggesting a possible subject of conversation, says to Bosco, "Parlez-lui de Guénon." The results are immediate:

> Aussitôt Gide s'anima. Jusqu'alors il avait manifesté, tant par son attitude que par ses propos, un soin constant de ne faire aucune objection, de prime abord. Il ouvrait les bras pour envelopper affectueusement les paroles qu'on lui adressait. Et puis, il s'accordait quelques délais pour y répondre, sans doute afin de pouvoir repenser, à sa façon, ce qu'il venait d'entendre. Ainsi y donnait-il un poids nouveau; ce qui n'était pas déplaisant pour celui qui avait parlé. De là, une très subtile séduction....

Bosco notes that, during such conversations, Gide would never rush into answers. His manner was rather to show that he was enjoying the turns the conversation took. Bosco notes that "il glissait peu à peu sa pensée." At the mention of Guénon's name, he became animated. "J'eus aussitôt," Bosco writes, "l'impression que nous avions abordé le sujet d'une affaire personnelle." The conversation changes tempo. Gide suddenly exclaims, "Si Guénon a raison, eh bien! toute mon oeuvre tombe..." The gathered acquaintances reply that, if indeed Gide's work were to come to nought, then so would that of others, Montaigne's for example. "Gide réfléchissait. A le voir, il ne semblait pas satisfait de cette éventualité, somme toute, très honorable: elle l'inquiétait. Enfin, ému, il avoua la raison de son inquiétude: 'Je n'ai rien, absolument rien à objecter à ce que Guénon a écrit. C'est irréfutable'." This unexpected admission, Bosco notes, "était d'une telle importance qu'il ne pouvait être suivi que d'un silence approbatif, dont cependant nul de nous n'attendait qu'il annoncât une déclaration de ralliement à la doctrine de Guénon."

> En effet, Gide dit:
>
> "Les jeux sont faits, je suis trop vieux."
>
> Ce retour sur lui-même, loin de l'abattre, le réconforta. Il reprit pied.
>
> "Et puis, affirma-t-il, j'aime passionnément la vie, la vie multiple. Je ne consens pas à priver la mienne du plaisir qu'elle prend à la diversité merveilleuse du monde, et pourquoi? pour sacrifier à une abstraction: à l'Unité, à l'Unité indéfinissable! Mais définir me plaît, par-dessus toutes choses. Les êtres limités, les créatures périssables, seules, m'intéressent et suscitent mon amour, mais non pas l'Etre, l'Etre éternel, l'Etre illimité. Je ne tiens pas du tout à m'y perdre, mais, bien au contraire, à m'y conserver, tant que je vis."
>
> Tel fut le principal de ce qui fut dit, au cours de cette troisième rencontre.

HENRI BOSCO

Bosco himself was well acquainted with the works of Guénon. In 1951, he wrote, "Ma femme et moi, nous possédions déjà une bonne connaissance de toute l'oeuvre écrite de Guénon--que j'admirais, et cette admiration est restée intacte: j'ai trouvé dans son oeuvre de nouvelles raisons de croire, catholiquement."[7]

Of his novels, Bosco's Malicroix (1948)[8] coincides most perfectly with Guénon's years of intellectual maturity; it embodies the strength of the "nouvelles raisons de croire" which Bosco had found in his work. This strange and beautiful voyage of the Self through all the obstacles of earthly dimension corresponds most intimately with the archetypal 'voyages' of man in Guénon's Symbolisme de la Croix and Les Etats multiples de l'Etre.

In its linear dispositions, Malicroix traces the narrator's voyage along the horizontal axis of the two-dimensional cross, slowly takes form through functions of individual ritual, and, gathering momentum with the discovery of the third dimension--the vertical axis of the traditional symbol--unites itself at the archetypal "Center of Centers". The implications of this voyage are contained in two key pages which immediately precede the narrative and constitute, as it were, both the sortie and the entrée en matière of the profane or chronological plot. "Par bonheur," the weary narrator writes as he contemplates his dead great-uncle Malicroix, "contre mon sommeil grandissant, s'appuyait peu à peu une forme indéfinissable, qui n'avait de la vie terrestre aucune des formes connues, que je ne voyais point, qui me touchait pourtant, je ne savais de quel contact, peut-être de celui que l'idée utilise à l'approche de l'âme; et le pur sortait de l'impur..." (p. 22). This moment of participation in a higher form, this alchemy of the self, gives the narrator up to what he names an "impersonal lucidity", whose consequences repeat exactly the primeval abolishing of history in the name of a transcendent prototype: "Je me sentais juste au centre d'une tranquillité mystérieuse où tout se composait miraculeusement sans que j'en fusse émerveillé." The old Malicroix, now an "ancestor" by his death, becomes the narrator's archetypal hero, and achieves identity with him through the steps of ancient ritual:

> Sans que je pusse la comprendre, je voyais que la pensée haute qui habitait cette maison, maintenant, descendait en moi, était devenue ma substance. Et je n'en cherchais plus le sens, puisqu'elle était mon être même. C'est à mon être désormais, murmurais-je dans cet état d'immatérielle vie de l'âme, qu'il faudra demander le secret de ces lieux. Et je m'allongeai sur le lit, où le vrai sommeil de mes pères m'enveloppa (p. 22).

The sleep here has all the qualities of Hermetic myth; it is a state between active consciousness and a voluntary, predilective suspension of profane activity. "Je flotte entre deux mondes." That which is "above", higher, more concentrated, corresponds to that which is "below", diluted in the rigid supporting framework of contingency. Indeed, "je n'entre point dans cet état tout de suite. D'habitude je dors comme les autres hommes." Yet the presence of that profane sleep of ordinary men is replaced here by an illuminating consciousness in the narrator which, abandoning the confines of mere memory (history), corresponds nicely to the archetypal or traditional mentality:

> J'appelle ce sommeil le sommeil de mes pères, parce que je n'y prends rien dans ma mémoire humaine pour y créer mes songes. Ce qui sort de moi vient d'ailleurs. Et ce sont d'autres souvenirs que ceux de ma vie antérieure dont se forme ma vie nocturne. Ils m'appartiennent cependant comme une sorte d'héritage fabuleux sur lequel j'ai toujours dormi et d'où s'élèvent quelquefois ces présents incompréhensibles (pp. 22-23).

The 'fabulous heritage' is almost certainly what Bosco had found in Guénon's symbolic vision: 'human" memory, linear time, measurable space, are all transcended in this half-sleep, which makes of the Self an instrument in the acquisition and transmission of archetypal realities. "Ce qui sort de moi vient d'ailleurs." In terms that are strongly reminiscent of Illuminist doctrine, the narrator seems to echo Saint-Georges de Marsais:

> Je restai un moment allongé sur mon lit, car l'éveil ne me touche jamais d'un coup; mais les régions de mon sommeil s'illuminent très lentement, l'une après l'autre. Je ne reprends une connaissance diurne de ma vie que par des sensations successives qui viennent, enveloppées dans un sentiment de bien-être grandissant, et de retour heureux (p. 23).

The return to the center, traced in this work, is perhaps not as happy, nor without the obstacles which are the locks and latches of mythical gates. Under the archetypal sign of his great-uncle Cornélius de Malicroix, Martial the narrator will find his own true correspondent, his "initiator", for with his uncle's property in the Camargue, Martial inherits Balandran.

In the words of Dromiols, the notary: "C'est lui qui mène le troupeau. Il pêche. Il chasse. Un homme singulier, vous vous en rendrez compte. Tout à M. Cornélius, et cela jusqu'au sang" (p. 29).

Balandran is perhaps the most enigmatic character in Malicroix. He is the vehicle, the symbol which measures for Martial the distance which separates him from the archetype of Malicroix. Balandran is primeval life itself: "De lui exhalait une odeur d'eau, de boue fraiche et de plante mouillée," the narrator observes, "comme s'il fût sorti de l'eau du fleuve." He adds: "Cette odeur semblait annoncer non point la présence d'un homme, mais d'un être encore attaché au limon originel" (p. 30). In the primeval dampness of the narrator's secret island, Balandran is the vertical axis which in the traditional symbol leads out of time and space. "Son apparition m'émerveillait. On ne l'entendait pas venir; et il passait entre le feu et moi, comme une ombre attentive à ne rien déranger au silence" (p. 45). His presence purifies Martial, is the catalyst between fire and the narrator's materia prima, bridging the two as one purifies the other. "Balandran s'en allait comme il était venu, par merveilleuse désincarnation. S'étant formé d'abord près du feu par miracle, il s'y dissolvait tout à coup" (p. 46).

In this alchemical atmosphere, Martial is purified by his initiator, and begins again his wanderings in a certain ephemeral half-world he had known in the presence of the dead Malicroix. "Je flottais dans un monde ambigu, hésitant entre les vapeurs du sommeil et une aube intérieure, désolante, où le spectacle de la vie diurne se recomposait tristement; car plus je retrouvais des figures concrètes plus je me sentais pauvre, abandonné..." (p. 93). Yet his bankruptcy is temporary, for Balandran will lead him to lose his individuality in the very multiplicity of manifested existence which had proved impenetrable before. On his small but teeming island, Martial discovers his inconsequential, infinite smallness, yet the discovery is a source of force: "Peut-être eus-je soudain la vive sensation, au sein de ce monde colossal, de ma petitesse. J'y pris la mesure des choses qui m'écrasaient et je m'y confondis jusqu'à participer à leur puissance surhumaine" (p. 107). This participation, reminiscent of the most ancient rites of renewal, performed in the name of archetypes whose functions, immemorially, were to engage primitive man in what Guénon has called a "feeling of eternity", this participation of Martial is the single most powerful moving force of his alchemical (metachemical) transformation:

> L'immensité des eaux, la majesté du fleuve en marche vers la mer, la montée des nuages, la hauteur, l'abondance et la force des arbres, le désert de la rive et mon sauvage isolement, tout un monde démesuré s'enfonca dans mon âme, dont il dilata les limites étroites, et il créa soudain, pour vivre en moi, des espaces immenses.

> Sur ces étendues infinies, des hauteurs s'élevaient, immatérielles, et, par-dessous, des profondeurs inventaient un nouvel espace et s'y abîmaient irréellement. Je ne perdais point conscience, et tant le sol boueux que l'eau m'étaient présents; mais j'étais soudain devenu plus sensible à ce sentiment de l'amplitude inspiré du dehors par la nature et qui m'arrivait du dedans avec toutes les voix de la solitude nouvelle. Cette rencontre du spectacle naturel et des voix intérieures créait, en un lieu indéfinissable, qui n'était ni en moi, ni hors de moi, cet état d'âme étrange, où l'eau, le ciel, les bois, exaltés jusqu'à l'émotion, s'abolissaient en elle, et dans lequel ces ébranlements de mon être prenaient une ampleur retentissante, du fait de la grandeur du fleuve, de la sauvagerie du ciel et du silence spacieux des arbres. Une puissance inattendue construisait sous mes yeux cette abstraction vivante et la substituait aux visions, aux odeurs, aux bruits, aux émotions et aux pensées.
>
> Du fleuve, des limons, du sol, des bois, la matière énorme fondait en ce sentiment de grandeur pur de toute substance. Affranchi, je ne sais comment, des servitudes ordinaires, je venais de passer, à l'improviste, d'une situation humaine déjà trop lourde pour ma médiocrite, à la connaissance ineffable de la majesté elle-même. Je respirais dans la grandeur; mon coeur y battait; ma pensée, immobile sur elle-même, n'était plus qu'un grand corps sonore à la mesure des hauteurs et des profondeurs solennelles de ce monde (pp. 107-108).

One would be hard put to find a more objective fictional staging of Guénon's Symbolisme de la Croix and Les Etats multiples de l'Etre. The lines of force of the traditional symbol, as well as the armature of archetypal symbolism in general, are present in this passage with a remarkable clarity. The "immense spaces" are qualified on the horizontal plane by the "étendues infinies", and by "amplitude", which are then named in concrete terms: water, woods, smells, sounds. The overwhelming sensation of verticality, expressed by "la hauteur", "la montée des nuages", as well as "profondeur", corresponds symmetrically to the "horizontality" of the senses, and the narrator embodies within himself the center which unites him to the "espaces immenses". These in turn are the complete or absolute functioning of both primordial directions which his perception takes. Indeed, so vast is the space "created" by these lines of force, that it becomes "un lieu indéfinissable", which is, he states, "ni en moi, ni hors de moi." Martial has effectively entered mythical time, is part of the ancient, cyclic scheme of the universe. He has in a sense repeated the act of creation which enabled traditional man to suspend the profane, to elevate himself beyond contingency as a preparation to taking up his physical existence. He can now return to linear time and face once again the unpredictable, "historical" future:

> Ainsi mon être se recomposait et ce mouvement de retour s'accomplissait si délicatement que, pour la première fois de ma vie, il me semblait que je pensais avec mon corps. Je touchais et je savourais cette pensée, et l'équilibre était si pur de mes sens et de mon esprit que je me croyais à la fois raisonnable et incorporel (p. 118).

The clear vision of Martial will now take shape as he finds himself able to move freely from objects to events to ideas, in a synthesis which renews the senses, celebrates them, and creates new forms: "La lumière, ... immobile et fondue à l'air, composait avec l'air un fluide calme où baignaient toutes les choses. Cette poussière lumineuse pénétrait la matière. Elle en dissolvait l'opacité sourde et créait à travers les objets les plus sombres une inaltérable transparence" (p. 126). And finally, the realization that "la vertu était née en moi ... de construire avec le réel des édifices purement mentaux qui se substituaient spontanément aux couleurs fraîches, franches, de la vie..." (p. 126). This gift of synthesis is then extended to its limits, beyond objects and the senses through which they are perceived, to a privileged moment where Martial achieves identity with his initiator Balandran, and consequently with the island to which he, Martial, had been a stranger at the death of Malicroix.

With this discovery within himself of the mysterious spirit of his great-uncle through the intercession of Balandran, Martial's alchemical, symbolic transmutation is complete, his life renewed with the confidence that every inanimate component of his microcosm, as well as all the "profane" products of his senses in their relation with external objects, will correspond to the archetype which is the ancestral spirit of Malicroix, a spirit suggested by the inscription on the family coat-of-arms:

Moi
Mal y croit qui tout n'y croit.

Balandran the Silent, Balandran the Hierophant, completes Martial, gives impulse and direction to the great lines, horizontal and vertical, which slowly join Martial's eyes to his inner vision, and give metaphysical form to the sphere of his daily becomings. The past, the island's as well as his own, thus sanctifies Martial's present by identifying him with the whole, with primordial unity: "J'entrais ainsi dans un monde mystérieux de souvenirs, qui n'étaient pas mes souvenirs; et je le savais; cependant je les retrouvais, comme si autrefois j'eusse vécu moi-même au milieu des événements dont ils me rapportaient les images lointaines mais encore reconnaissables" (p. 178).

With the présences which had invaded the island, as well as the fulfilling silences of the house of Malicroix, Martial discovers the quintessence, in himself, of the two branches of the dynasty, for he is a Mégremut by his father, and the Mégremuts are "doux et patients". Martial is a Malicroix by his mother, and "c'est par le sang de nos mères que passent en nous les violences, et toujours une race forte en tire le trait singulier qui lui imprime son génie" (p. 14).

The two blood-lines united in Martial correspond to the planes and dimensions of the cruciform symbols which Bosco had found in Guénon's works, and which constitute the armature of this novel. The passive, feminine principle of "ampleur", which is the legacy of Martial's Mégremut origins, corresponds to the horizontal plane of the three-dimensional cross, and constitutes the sensory, earthly, tangible modalities which are the possibilities of the flesh. The active, masculine principle of "exaltation", the heritage of Malicroix, corresponds to the vertical plane of the cross, and represents the infinite possibilities of the spirit. Embodying, as he does, these two primordial principles, Martial finds in himself all the combined possibilities of the one Center, whence all true movement is possible. Yet it is only with Balandran's mysterious, meaningful disappearance that Martial, left with no more of his initiator's signs, is forced to examine and use the possibilities of his privileged place at the Center, through a search for Balandran:

> Je dus m'enfoncer loin et bas, dans la dissolution de mon âme malade, et alors j'effleurai peut-être les confins du pays sans lumière et sans ombre. Où fus-je, si je fus; et quel monde ai-je traversé, sans le voir, ni l'entendre, avant d'atteindre un état plus lointain encore que l'abolition de moi-même, où cependant il me souvient (mais d'un souvenir ineffable) que je m'enfonçais? Passage de je ne sais qui, je ne sais où, vers je ne sais quelles régions indéfinies. Je n'étais plus qu'un faible mouvement, et un mouvement sans vitesse qui, me laissant là où j'étais, soulevait le non-être tout entier dans un obscur déplacement des abîmes qui s'ouvrent au delà du plus vaste abîme de l'espace (p. 200).

With this total abolition of the self, through the search for the lost Balandran, Martial discovers a freedom which he calls "le déplacement pur", and which leaves his body weak with a sickness unto death. Mysteriously, a woman appears, and slowly nurses him back to health. At first, she is no more than a thought to him. "Pourtant, peu à peu, je la vois. Peu à peu elle admet plus de lumière." Yet her form materializes slowly, for "elle tient à la nuit d'où elle est née" (p. 209). Slowly, having brought with her the essence of Balandran, she appears to Martial as the incarnate legacy of his initiator, a true companion to his new-found solitude. He describes her first formal entry into his life in exactly the same terms he had used to express the presence and influence of Balandran: "Elle s'est glissée lentement entre le feu et moi" (p. 213). She, now, will be the purifying element in his life, and in the sacred, alchemical transmutation which will follow, his initiation and passage into the Center will be complete:

> Nous étions debout sur le seuil, épaule contre épaule; et, devant nous le ciel d'hiver, immobile et pur, rayonnait. Il en venait vers nous ce message d'exaltation et d'amplitude qui voyage, éclairant les mondes de la nuit, à travers la lumière sidérale (p. 215).

The two most important terms in Guénon's vocabulary are here made the focal point of Bosco's narrative. By a powerful combination or function of Amplitude and Exaltation, the two complementary worlds of Martial are united in terms of a metaphysical unity. The island, with all it represents on the horizontal plane of bushes, flowers, trees, and water, comes to correspond to the ephemeral sky and its invitation to ascend, to elevate oneself on the vertical plane; Martial's Mégremut origins, his passivity, his "Yin", are tempered by the fiery, active, "Yang" facet of the Malicroix. All these binary components, however, would be meaningless if taken as separate phenomena of the individual. For there to be *réalisation*, for the symbolic correspondences to measure truly the possibilities of Martial's total being, there has to take place a fundamental identity between the individual and the archetype. This is what it meant for traditional man to achieve unity with the "Center of Centers".

In his doctoral dissertation, *Henri Bosco et la Poétique du Sacré* (Princeton, 1969), Jean-Pierre Cauvin has traced the spiritual itinerary of Martial as a pilgrimage whose trials the narrator undergoes in an attempt to reach a state of grace, experiencing "a form of consecration within the framework of a seasonal and cosmic liturgy that guides him through his existence on earth." This cosmic liturgy is performed in poetic terms which are perhaps as old as man himself. Indeed, poetry is considered by Bosco to be a spiritual exercise. In a few concentrated pages which Bosco wrote for *Fontaine* in 1942, entitled *L'Exaltation et l'Amplitude*, he makes of poetry "un moyen de haute connaissance," identifying it with Guénon's symbolic structures, and placing it in the direct ancestral line of the traditional or archetypal mentality. Indeed, Bosco states, poetry "nous prend et nous entraîne par une sorte de magie dont la vertu repose en des incantations";

these incantations are profoundly sacred, and make of poetry a symbol of the poet's free *movement* between the two complementary domains of his perception: the tangible and the abstract, historical event and myth, individual and archetype, linear and cyclic time. This *movement* is the most crucial quality of poetry according to Bosco, for "il nous détache, il nous tire de nous et nous soulève, *par sa puissance centrifuge*, jusqu'à une exaltation surhumaine dont les vibrations deviennent bientôt si intenses que le temps et l'espace se réduisent à leur minimum de durée et d'étendue."[9]

In the primitive mentality it was by an analogous process --often by an identical incantatory movement--that man was able to abolish profane or linear time and enter the domain of mythical or cyclic continuity. Through an act of creation, in imitation and celebration of Creation itself, it was possible to transcend the contingent and identify with the Creator. For Bosco, poetry is the highest form of creative expression: "En fait, ce n'est pas nous qui l'exprimons: c'est elle-même qui s'exprime; et nous facilitons de gré ou de force, joyeusement ou douloureusement, cette séparation, ce départ, et enfin cet antagonisme, parce que vis-à-vis de nous et du monde, nous sentons le besoin impérieux d'affirmer notre création intérieure; et nous ne le pouvons qu'en la laissant jouir d'une vie autonome, hors de nous, comme une étrange créature, pétrie de sensations, de sentiments, de pensées et chargée de puissance magique. Cette créature, c'est le poème."

This unique and distinguishing liturgical function of poetry is the sign of Bosco's luminous "Moroccan Pages", published in 1950 under the title Des Sables à la mer.[10] Here the themes of Malicroix reappear, seen now in a dry, Mediterranean setting in which the poet will seek an intimate, archetypal identity with his subject, which is the land itself. His itinerary of perception is simple: "Ne formuler que des nuées mais formuler quand-même; n'entrer en rien; ne sortir de rien; se laisser dériver à l'eau, et perdre le fil parmi ces délices... Ce fil, rien n'est plus doux que de le perdre, pour en suivre un autre et le perdre aussi. De fil en fil l'âme se dénoue, s'effiloche, se disperse et se fond dans l'être universel" (p. 26). This "melting" of the Self in what he calls 'Universal Being' follows alchemical transmutations which are similar to those of Martial in Malicroix, the difference here being that author and character are revealed as having been one and the same person. What the eye sees is transformed, synthesized, purified into transcendent vision, for in Morocco, the author observes, "la magie travaille sur ses terres," and one must participate in them in order to measure their essence:

> Enfouis sous le sol, cachés entre deux murs,
> scellés dans une tombe, depuis des siècles,
> dorment de fabuleux trésors. Nul n'ignore cela.
> Mais on ne saurait les atteindre sans asservir
> à ces recherches, par la puissance des

> incantations évocatrices et les Clefs talismaniques, les Génies locaux, seuls capables de tirer du fond de la terre l'Or mystérieux des anciens hommes (p. 49).

Initiation alone can give meaning to that immeasurable "inner gold" which is at the Supreme Center, the meeting-point of the universal axes in Guénon's symbol. It is through a process of initiation, containing ritual and a capacity to translate within oneself the signs of objects, that the visible is modified and identity with essence is achieved. The poet finds the earth impregnated with magic:

> Dès que tombe la nuit, de l'être au non-être, les frontières deviennent indéfinissables. Des infiltrations de charmes pénètrent le sous-sol magique et tout objet est silencieusement occupé par un génie occulte. Ces interventions furtives modifient le visible et brouillent les identités. Les enchantements naturels, qui opèrent à notre insu sur les apparences sensibles, transforment nos rapports avec l'eau, la pierre, les sons et les parfums. Ils décomposent les distances et dégagent ces étendues imaginaires si propices à l'apparition du mirage (p. 59).

From the initial view of his itinerary, which had seemed as arduous and fraught with perils as had been that of Martial on his at-first obscure, hermetic island, the poet, declaring "j'ai longtemps cherché" in retrospect, begins slowly to fathom and become part of the free, expressive movement of his vision in terms of correspondence and unity. Every garden in this North African pilgrimage, every bit of desert, every tomb, every patch of sea, becomes an extension of the poet's eye, and translates in turn the moving locus of the formless Self:

> Maintenant je sais.
>
> Ici règne le Symbole. La vie végétale, l'eau calme, la pierre de la vasque ou de la stèle, émanent de l'Existence intérieure. Sous la feuille, sous le reflet, sous le poli du marbre, se cachent le Passage au delà de la forme, la Délivrance et enfin la Station divine. Celui qui hante ces lieux purs se trouve pris sous l'influence de la Descente de la Paix.
>
> Ici invisiblement s'unissent le Multiple dans l'Un et l'Un dans le Multiple.
>
> C'est le Jardin de la Doctrine (p. 90).

In that invisible union, which is the essence of all Hermetic thought, adapted by Bosco from Guénon's Symbolisme de la Croix and Les Etats multiples de l'Etre, the poet is reunited, as was Martial before him, with the Supreme Center. This great and final locus of all symbolic perception creates all movement, yet is perfectly still itself; it measures all relationships, yet is itself immeasurable; it defines all phenomena, yet is undefinable itself; it is the repository of all sacred numbers, and is the immemorial symbol of perfection. United with it, the poet becomes complete, and corresponds most perfectly to Universal Man. Once again using the vocabulary of Guénon, Bosco consecrates his creative act in the name of the traditional symbol:

> Uni au Principe suprême

Il connaît maintenant
La grandeur de l'Exaltation et de l'Amplitude
(p. 98).

ANDRE BRETON

> Ne cesse d'être d'actualité la fameuse question posée par Arthur Cravan "d'un ton très fatigué et très vieux" à André Gide: "Monsieur Gide, où en sommes-nous avec le temps?-- Six heures moins un quart", répondait ce dernier sans y entendre malice. Ah! il faut bien le dire, nous sommes mal, nous sommes très mal avec le temps.
>
> André Breton
>
> Preface, Premier Manifeste du Surréalisme (1929).

During the course of a radio interview in 1952, André Parinaud questioned André Breton about the writers who had contributed to the formation of the review, La Révolution surréaliste. Breton named several of the early Surrealists whose participation he had sollicited for the review (Artaud, Leiris, Naville, Roussel), reminiscing about those early years of the movement. "N'avez-vous pas sollicité d'autres participations," Parinaud asked; "ce choix pourrait nous éclairer plus encore sur votre position?" Breton answered:

> Parmi les collaborations souhaitées, je n'en vois qu'une autre qui nous manqua: ce fut celle de René Guénon.
>
> Nous n'avions guère de titres à y prétendre, il est vrai. Et pourtant ce fut aussi une déception. Il est, de toute façon, très symptomatique que nous nous soyons adressés à lui. Cela suffirait à montrer que, dès ce moment, nous étions attirés par la pensée dite 'traditionnelle' et prêts à l'honorer en lui. Je crois que, parmi nous, les plus inclinés dans cette voie étaient alors Artaud, Leiris et moi, bien que ce fut Naville qui ait proposé d'écrire à Guénon. Il est curieux de conjecturer en quoi l'évolution du surréalisme eût pu être différente, si par impossible un tel concours ne s'était refusé...." 11

Would Guénon's active and deliberate cooperation have changed the course of Surrealism? If anything, it might have changed Guénon, maybe given him more of a sense of humor, perhaps made him say "je" more often than his customary editorial "nous". All of this, along with Breton's question, is conjecture. The fact remains, as I hope to show, that an active and cultivated awareness of Guénon's work seems to have marked Surrealism. Indeed, in its most fundamental definitions, as well as in the detailed poetic stagings of these definitions, Breton's Surrealism corresponds to the archetypal order of Guénon's symbolic universe, and is therefore inscribed in the great circle of Hermetic doctrine.

The first Manifeste du Surréalisme (1924) traces Man's fall and the artist's rising in terms of the two axes of the traditional symbol. Man, Breton writes, "appartient désormais corps et âme à une impérieuse nécessite pratique, qui ne souffre pas qu'on la perde de vue." The consequence, he continues, is that "tous ses gestes manqueront d'*ampleur*...," while "le seul mot de liberté est tout ce qui m'*exalte* encore."[12] Through this exaltation, which is the life-force of Surrealism, Breton inscribes the artist in archetypal figures whose geometry should be related to Guénon's work in order to be understood, because this relationship was an explicit acknowledgement of Breton. The *real* functioning of thought, according to Breton's celebrated definition of Surrealism, takes place beyond the contingencies of reason, beyond aesthetic or moral preoccupations; it is the product of powerful, cyclic time, *imaginative* space, a certain intuition for archetypal possibilities, because "le surréalisme repose sur la croyance à la réalité supérieure de certaines formes d'associations négligées jusqu'à lui, à la toute-puissance du rêve, au jeu désintéressé de la pensée" (*Premier Manifeste*, p. 40). These "forms" are related to Hermetic doctrine, which is the basis of all archetypal symbolism. The armature of these "formes d'associations" is unveiled in the manifestoes, albeit not very methodically, and is composed of language as the tangible reflection of an alchemy of the Self, as the instrument which the artist must use if he hopes to express the reordering of linear time into paradigmatic duration. The artist's language, Breton notes, is the voice of intuition, taking from the alphabet of, say, current headlines to construct real thought:

Je fais
en dansant
Ce qu'on a fait, ce qu'on va faire

Dance here is part of a ritual, in which past and future will conspire to annihilate the transient moment, a ritual by which time itself must lose its hold on the poet. By the ordering of these few simple words, Breton may be said to have combined the two primordial directions of time which Guénon, in creating his *Symbolisme de la Croix*, had borrowed from Hermetic doctrine: the eternal "pastness", *in illo tempore*, of archetypal or primitive man, and the ever-awaited Second Coming, *ab aeterno*, of historical man. Both are essentially mythical concepts of time, and both could be conceived as poles of linear time--were it not for the central presence of the dancer, "je", who, much like Proust's narrator, pronounces ritualistically the words in *Combray*: "Un homme qui dort tient en cercle autour de lui le fil des heures, l'ordre des années et des mondes."[13] In this light, the poet's life takes on what Breton considers to be *real* meaning; indeed, "c'est vivre et cesser de vivre qui sont des solutions imaginaires. L'existence est ailleurs" (*Premier Manifeste*, p. 63). Existence, precisely, is in the discovery of cyclic time, of a periodic rebirth which functions in terms of an archetype--that of childhood for example:

> L'esprit qui plonge dans le surréalisme revit avec exaltation la meilleure part de son enfance (Premier Manifeste, p. 55).

And again:

> C'est peut-être l'enfance qui approche le plus de la 'vraie vie'; l'enfance au-delà de laquelle l'homme ne dispose, en plus de son laissez-passer, que de quelques billets de faveur; l'enfance où tout concourait cependant à la possession efficace, et sans aléas, de soi-même (Premier Manifeste, p. 56).

Thanks to the Surrealist act, Breton writes, this possibility of a return becomes real, becomes a means to salvation. Yet the path back is not easy. "On traverse, avec un tressaillement, ce que les occultistes appellent des paysages dangereux." By the exalted fear which such a journey evokes, through the images which are the vehicles of a fantasmagoric art, the Surrealist poet finds the only guides on the voyage of the Self:

> L'esprit se convainc peu à peu de la réalité suprême de ces images. Se bornant d'abord à les subir, il s'aperçoit bientôt qu'elles flattent sa raison, augmentent d'autant sa connaissance. Il prend conscience des étendues illimitées où se manifestent ses désirs, où le pour et le contre se réduisent sans cesse, où son obscurité ne le trahit pas. Il va, porté par ces images qui le ravissent, qui lui laissent à peine le temps de souffler sur le feu de ses doigts. C'est la plus belle des nuits, la nuit des éclairs: le jour, auprès d'elle, est la nuit (Premier Manifeste, p. 53).

With the Second Manifeste (1930), the Surrealist itinerary is given a destination which is unequivocally that of the alchemist's magisterium, and which in light of Breton's later piece, Du surréalisme en ses oeuvres vives (1953), is that of Guénon's symbolic universe. This destination is strongly reminiscent of the Supreme Center studied by Eliade in the sacred texts of archaic or traditional man, although Breton calls it a "point":

> Tout porte à croire qu'il existe un certain point de l'esprit d'où la vie et la mort, le réel et l'imaginaire, le passé et le futur, le communicable et l'incommunicable, le haut et le bas cessent d'être perçus contradictoirement (Second Manifeste, p. 154).

Intimate and exact correspondences between these groups of phenomena, where all binary components are seen as complementaries of each other, are at the very basis of Hermetic tradition as exemplified in the Emerald Table, and are conceived as forming the great path to the "Place of Peace", the Cabbalistic Shekinah, the Sufi Sâkinah, the alchemists' Center of Centers. All of Surrealist activity is given impulse and direction by "l'espoir de détermination de ce point," based on what Breton calls the "psychic forces" of the poet:

> l'idée de surréalisme tend simplement à la récupération totale de notre force psychique par un moyen qui n'est autre que la descente vertigineuse en nous, l'illumination systématique des lieux cachés et l'obscurcissement progressif des autres lieux, la promenade perpetuelle en pleine zone interdite... (Second Manifeste, pp. 167-168).

Yet if this point which sums up all harmony is to be found in the Self, it is a Self which does not repose on individuality, but takes its meaning from archetypes. In the *Second Manifeste*, Breton writes: "Je tiens à préciser que selon moi, il faut se défier du culte des hommes, si grands apparemment soient-ils" (p. 157). In *Prolégomènes à un troisième manifeste* (1942), he goes one step further: "L'homme n'est peut-être pas le centre, le point de mire de l'univers" (p. 350). The "zone interdite" where the poet must wander perpetually is what makes of his Self something analogous to Rimbaud's "Alchimie du Verbe", a transmutation and a purification of the Self which, Breton states, "peut être tenu le plus authentiquement pour l'amorce de l'activité difficile qu'aujourd'hui seul le surréalisme poursuit." Both alchemies, in turn, Rimbaud's perhaps less self-consciously, contain the quintessential lines of force of traditional alchemy, for they both share with it, Breton states, "une remarquable analogie de but"; the alchemists' Philosophic Stone had but a single overriding purpose: "permettre à l'imagination de l'homme de prendre sur toutes choses une revanche éclatante." The Surrealists, Breton writes, after centuries of spiritual domestication and demented resignation, will now make their voices heard in the name of an identical alchemical purpose: "tenter d'affranchir définitivement cette imagination par le '*long, immense, raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens*' et le reste" (*Second Manifeste*, pp. 206-208).

The rest, Breton seems to imply by his later interests, includes that dérèglement which makes of the poet the spokesman, as Guénon was, for a primordial tradition which one sense alone could provide: the sense of intuition, without which all analogy must fail. I suggest that it is precisely this sense which Breton had in mind in stating that "le tout, pour le surréalisme, a été de se convaincre qu'on avait mis la main sur la 'matière première' (au sens alchimique) du langage..." (Du surréalisme en ses oeuvres vives, p. 357). It is by the operation of this essentially poetic imperative --what Guénon called "the cosmogonic Fiat Lux"--that the poet identifies with Universal Man at the locus of axes of the three-dimensional cross and transcends the prisons of linear time and measured space. Breton is conscious of his debts:

> L'esprit qui rend possible, et même concevable, une telle opération n'est autre que celui qui a animé de tout temps la philosophie occulte et selon lequel, du fait que l'énonciation est à l'origine de tout, il s'ensuit qu'il faut que le nom germe pour ainsi dire, sans quoi il est faux. Le principal apport du surréalisme, dans la poésie comme dans la plastique, est d'avoir suffisamment exalté cette germination pour faire apparaître comme dérisoire tout ce qui n'est pas elle (Du surréalisme en ses oeuvres vives, p. 358).

Now the initial germination of the word "Surrealism", Breton has stated, "ne fait, en somme, que 'recouper' un des grands mots d'ordre traditionnels, qui est d'avoir à 'crever le tambour de la raison raisonnante et en contempler le trou,' ce qui mènera à s'éclairer les symboles jusqu'alors ténébreux."

These heretofore dark symbols are summed up by Breton in the one perennial archetype which makes of Guénon's geometric symbols (the three-dimensional cross, the triad, as well as all of their possible extensions in metaphysical terms), the living materia prima of the Surrealist vision:

> Il y va, en effet, là plus qu'ailleurs, au premier chef, de la nécessité de reconstitution de l'Androgyne primordial dont toutes les traditions nous entretiennent et de son incarnation, par-dessus tout désirable et tangible, à travers nous (Du surréalisme en ses oeuvres vives, p. 360).

This archetype, which is Nature itself, brings us back full circle to Hermetic doctrine, for Surrealism, Breton states, "vérifie alors...que 'tout ce qui est en haut est comme ce qui est en bas' et tout ce qui est en dedans comme ce qui est en dehors" (Du surréalisme en ses oeuvres vives, p. 361). With the first principle of the Emerald Table thus consecrated by the poet, thus made the justification of all poetic activity, it is little wonder that Breton's vocabulary is evocative of Lavater's conception of the world as "un grand texte", of Baudelaire's "monde d'hiéroglyphes", and of the Illuminist doctrine which was the half-way house of primordial doctrine in its transmission to modern poetry. "Le monde, à partir de là," Breton writes, with reference to Hermes' first dictum, "s'offre à [l'homme] comme un cryptogramme qui ne demeure indéchiffrable qu'autant que l'on n'est pas rompu à la gymnastique acrobatique permettant à volonté de passer d'un agrès à l'autre" (Du surréalisme en ses oeuvres vives, p. 361).[14] It is precisely this passage that reunites the Surrealist poet with Universal Man, for in transcending the rigid barriers of contingency, the poet, as well as Man the Archetype, finds his place at the Center and obtains, in Guénon's words, "la sensation de l'éternité."[15]

With the Alchemists, Breton calls for the maintenance of the Maranatha, placed before the Great Work to mislead the profane: "JE DEMANDE L'OCCULTATION PROFONDE, VERITABLE DU SURREALISME" (Second Manifeste, p. 211), because doctrine can survive the fatal cycle, Kali-Yuga, only through secrecy. Echoing Guénon, Breton notes that this fundamental task of Surrealism in no way means to imply that ordinary, individual man "jouit d'une supériorité absolue sur tous les autres êtres, autrement que le monde trouve en lui son achèvement..." (Du surréalisme en ses oeuvres vives, p. 362). "En ce sens," Breton states in the final paragraph of his doctrinal writings, "on n'a rien dit de mieux ni de plus définitif que René Guénon, dans son ouvrage Les Etats multiples de l'Etre."[16] Man's only means to true movement above and beyond his contingent state, which Guénon had named "metaphysical intuition", Breton here names poetic intuition:

> Celle-ci, enfin débridée dans le surréalisme, se veut non seulement assimilatrice de toutes formes connues mais hardiment créatrice de nouvelles formes--soit en posture d'embrasser toutes les structures du monde, manifesté ou

> non. Elle seule nous pourvoit du fil qui remet sur le chemin de la Gnose, en tant que connaissance de la Réalité suprasensible, 'invisiblement visible dans un éternel mystère'" (Du Surréalisme en ses oeuvres vives, p. 362).

With Poisson Soluble (1924), we have one of the earliest stagings of Breton's and Surrealism's archetypal universe. Written as a direct function of "psychic automatism", Poisson Soluble does not lend itself to a linear exposition of its momentum and impact, but presents, dissolved in the intuitions of unpremeditated language, the artist's thirst for a universal or metaphysical identity.

As the enigmatic title of this piece seems to imply, certain creatures are, along with the narrator and his shadowy acquaintances, the only concrete, physical attachments between the poet and his paradigmatic dreams. Indeed, creatures (insects, birds) are invested with powers of passage which are at first greater than those of the poet, for they seem to initiate him into flight. Witness the strange wasps, whose paths evoke the lower half of Solomon's Seal, fighting its way up to complete itself in the triangle of Heaven:

> De bas en haut s'envolaient de grandes guêpes isocèles (p. 69).

Indeed, the poet states, "plusieurs échos se répondent sur terre," making of "le haut" the origin of sound itself: "les oiseaux tenant comme d'ordinaire leur rôle entre sol et ciel..." (p. 81).

It is up to the poet to perceive the correspondences which exist between the spheres of elevated reality and the profane, yet the value of these perceptions is ironic in the early moments of Poisson Soluble. Playing ingenuously on the vocabulary of transportation, he conceives of the writer's activities in terms of tedious, literally subterranean inventions, as a subway which never surfaces:

> Oui, naturellement, je changerai à X. Pourvu que je ne manque pas la correspondance avec l'ennui! Nous y sommes: l'ennui, les belles parallèles, ah! que les parallèles sont belles sous la perpendiculaire de Dieu (p. 72).

The language of geometry is striking in Poisson Soluble, and is often used to trace the poet's path on the axes of universal symbols: "La vérité s'appuie sur les joncs mathématiques de l'infini" (p. 76). These mathematical ties are in turn translated in terms of rain, which is a powerful symbol in much of Breton's writing:

> La pluie seule est divine...n'oublions pas que la pluie seule est divine.
>
> J'attends la pluie comme une lampe élevée trois fois dans la nuit, comme une colonne de cristal qui monte et qui descend... (p. 96).

Rain is a path which seems to dissolve the poet's soul so as to purify it in its rise to the farthest reaches of Sky. Rain's divine qualities, its identification with a "crystal column", its luminous, thrice-great powers, all seem to identify it with the vertical axis of Guénon's cross, along which the poet finds the infinite possibilities of his becomings, and where earthly phenomena become mere shadows of reality:

> Entre la pluie et moi il a été passé un pacte éblouissant et c'est en souvenir de ce pacte qu'il pleut parfois en plein soleil (p. 97).

Here again the birds appear, messengers of sleep, completing the poet's passage into mythical being and archetypal time. The voyage begins with a hope: "Lorsque je tends mes filets aux oiseaux du sommeil, j'espère avant tout capter les merveilleux paradis de la pluie totale, l'oiseau-pluie comme il y a l'oiseau-lyre" (pp. 97-98). Slowly, arduously, passage is achieved at last, "Et me voici, prophète à la tempe plus pure que les miroirs, enchaîné par les lueurs de mon histoire, couvert d'amours glaçantes, en proie aux fantasmagories de la baguette brisée et demandant que par pitié, d'un seul brillant final, on me ramène à la vie" (p. 102). It is this passage that permits an identity to occur between the poet and the Center, which is "la source... la source que j'entraîne sans difficultés dans ces parages où mes idées reculent au-delà du possible..." (p. 103).

Later, a young apprentice, perhaps the poet himself, takes a mirror to his lonely room on the seventh floor. He enters the room with his body describing a cross ("il tenait les deux bras écartés pour soutenir son fardeau"), which he places carefully in a corner of the room, and then lies in bed: "Il ne ferma pas les yeux de la nuit; le miroir se reflétait lui-même à une profondeur inconnue, à une distance incroyable." All objects, people, cities, "n'avaient que le temps d'apparaître entre deux de ses épaisseurs," and vanish to be replaced by vague forms, describing the essences in which these objects had been molded. From these ephemeral cinders of his past and future, the apprentice sees appear "ce jeune homme souriant dont le visage était pareil à un globe..." (pp. 104-105). In every way, this product of the mirror is the exact correspondent of the apprentice, yet the latter's initiation has produced a double whose globe-like face and analogical (from the mirror) apparition identifies him with a being who is quite reminiscent of Universal Man.

With this identity established, *Poisson Soluble* seems to disintegrate, barring all reason from its context, and enunciating with powerful anarchy what Guénon had reserved for "la part de l'inexprimable." At the end, there is only Satan's promise, "de vous convier à *des spectacles moins rationnels* car je ne désespère pas de faire de l'éternité la seule poésie fugitive, entendez-vous, la seule poésie fugitive! Ha ha ha ha!" (pp. 128-129). This unique, this ephemeral poetry which Breton makes of the universe of Surrealism translates an alchemy of the Self, which by a process of purification through incantation, dissolves the individual and makes of him a participant in the symbol. If there is a "key" to this astonishingly complex narrative, Breton probably hints at it in the Premier Manifeste (p. 56): "POISSON SOLUBLE, n'est-ce pas moi le poisson soluble, je suis né sous le signe des Poissons et l'homme est soluble dans sa pensée!"

It is this "soluble" quality of thought--elevated, poetic thought--that made the Surrealistic revolt against their times something extremely fruitful in the domain of literary creation.

Nadja incarnates this revolt, beginning with the author's regret at not being able to rise above profane or linear time: "C'est un grand regret que de ne pouvoir combler cette lacune, que de ne pouvoir pleinement saisir tout ce qui, dans un tel univers, va contre l'ordre prévu, dresse une nouvelle échelle des choses."[17] The hierarchy hinted at here, which Guénon had written of as hierarchically superposed levels of being, will reconstitute, Breton writes, "l'univers qui est le nôtre." To eliminate this problem, an act fundamental to the idea of revolt, "il faut chercher une échappatoire," a means to bypass or transcend, if possible, the limits of time. This "échappatoire", Breton states, will be the creative act itself.

Nadja is very superficially a narrative in the usual or accepted sense; its similarity to Bosco's *Malicroix*, for example, lies not in the byways and curfews of narrative, but in the transmission, as Breton puts it, of "les épisodes les plus marquants de ma vie telle que je peux la concevoir *hors de son plan organique*" (p. 18). The tangible, manifested levels of the creative process are often abandoned in *Nadja*, making room for the successive, disordered peregrinations of the Self out of time and space. It is a narrative only in that the world seen through it unfolds, yet it is an unfolding "sans ordre préétabli," and takes form "selon le caprice de l'heure qui laisse surnager ce qui surnage." Narrative here becomes an instrument of dissolution, the first part of the alchemical binary, *solve et coagula*, in the "purification" of linear time, of cause and effect, into cyclic or mythical duration. It is a staging, at first, of "la grave insuffisance de tout calcul soi-disant rigoureux.....," of "toute action qui exige une application suivie, et qui a pu être préméditée" (p. 54).

With Nadja herself, the narrator is overwhelmed by the inexorable dominion of linear, consequential order. "Le temps est taquin," she notes, "le temps est taquin parce qu'il faut que toute chose arrive à son heure" (p. 103). It is only through the dissolution of consequences, through the willful, concerted abandonment of time, through "le crépitement du bois d'une horloge que je jette au feu pour qu'elle meure en sonnant l'heure" (p. 109), that the artist can begin to benefit metaphysically from the real order which he seeks. In this sense, Nadja is full of the promises of cyclic duration, full of the sublime anger and sense of revolt which will train the artist to take the essential step to myth. While Breton does not seem to take this final step in Nadja, the promise of passage is there, and becomes the sign implicit in his poems.

In "Amour Parcheminé" (Clair de Terre) concrete metaphors are planted securely in the stream of dream, and seem to be the bridges which lead the poet into and out of mythical time: "J'appelle une fille qui rêve dans la maisonnette dorée; elle me rejoint sur les tas de mousse noire et m'offre ses lèvres qui sont des pierres au fond de la rivière rapide."[18] Reality here becomes a harmonious correspondence, an interchange between the ephemeral universe of dreams and the tenuous world of objects. The dreaming girl, called by the poet, gives him lips which are not "comme des pierres", nor as cool or as smooth; they are the pebbles, which in turn are the poet himself--"comme un rêve de pierre," in the words of Baudelaire the Alchemist. The lack of a linguistic copula here makes of the poet himself the fulcrum of harmony, the factor of coagula between dreams and stones, the symbol of identity, the arbiter of unity.

Chronometric time becomes a game which will fit the player in the poet's liberating myth. "Sur une serviette damée rouge," he writes in Cartes sur les dunes, "sont disposés les jours de l'année." These days, and the hours which measure them, are now the airy armature of myth, where Woman and the masculine Azur combine to form the Primordial Androgyne. In Au regard des divinités the poet plays with time and space, mocks them with precision, jabs them with a mockery of precision:

> Un peu avant minuit près du débarcadère
> Si une femme échevelée te suit n'y prends pas garde.
> C'est l'azur. Tu n'as rien à craindre de l'azur.

The fearlessness he invokes is now the product of habit. No terror, no anger mitigate the poet's flight, and the objects which were the crutches and banes of his anterior life are now the knowing, skillful guides of his airy appointments:

> Il y aura un grand vase blond dans un arbre.
> Le clocher du village des couleurs fondues
> Te servira de point de repère. Prends ton temps,
> Souviens-toi. Le geyser brun qui lance au ciel les
> pousses de fougère
> Te salue.

With every step he takes in this new order, the poet is more and more sure of his itinerary; his images become functions of profane time in order to fix them in the time of myth, always expressed in the cyclic present, yet never in an authentic present tense:

In *Epervier Incassable*:

> A *minuit*, la chambre souterraine *s'étoile*
> vers les théâtres de genre où les jumelles
> tiennent le principal rôle.

In *A Francis Picabia*:

> On *voit* *le soir*
> Tomber collier de perles des monts...

In *Rendez-vous*:

> Un joli bagne d'artistes où des zèbres bleus,
> fouettés par les soupirs qui *s'enroulent*
> *le soir* autour des arbres, exécutent sans fin
> leur numéro!

In *Privé*:

> La température s'est brusquement adoucie et
> *chaque matin* la légèreté *secoue* sur nos toits
> ses cheveux d'ange.

It is thus that the prediction of *Immaculée Conception* comes true, that "le vague remplace peu à peu le déterminé."[19] With the flights of the poet and *l'azur*, all chronometric time begins to feed upon itself, becomes the beats and measures of a mythical itinerary, where "la certitude d'arriver" is no less than what Breton calls "le centième coup de sonnette à une porte qui ne s'ouvre pas." Certainty is no longer a function of time, no longer a coefficient of space; it is the intuition of a cyclic duration.

With Breton, Eluard brought this intuition into play to break down the barriers of profane time. In Les limites du malheur, he writes of life as being no longer "à la mesure du temps." With his wife's untimely death in 1946, he writes, "la mort a rompu l'équilibre du temps."[20] In Le Phénix, love itself becomes the factor of the symbolic return to an anterior life, beyond the vicissitudes of time and space, in an adrogynal state of grace:

> Je suis entré dans la ronde
> De ta vie malgré le temps
>
> Je t'accorde le temps de vivre
> Et le temps d'avoir vécu
>
> Tu m'accordes le temps d'être
> Avec toi comme un enfant...
>
> Je t'aime pour tous les temps où je n'ai pas vécu.

Nadja too will learn to love "for all the times where she did not live." At the end of one of her hallucinations, she asks, "Où étais-je? Il y a des siècles!" (p. 83). And the narrator states, by way of explanation, "qu'elle avait choisi une fois pour toutes de n'en tenir aucun compte, de se désintéresser de l'heure" (p. 125). It is, Breton writes, "en temps illicite" that one is able to contemplate the facets of eternity, so as to make of them the true, the only forces of the poet's exaltation. "Le bulletin météorologique reste muet sur tout changement de temps d'un genre nouveau..." (Immaculée Conception: "La Surprise"). It is through the Self that this change will take place, giving birth to love, which Breton and Eluard saw as the one human experience which came closest to a symbol of eternity. In Le dur désir de durer, Eluard finds freedom in the boundless love of Poet and Woman; all becomes clear as a function of this love: "Sous le ciel noir, nous voyons clair" (Par un baiser). In Belle, he writes:

> ...tu vas briser en t'endormant la chaîne
> Qui lie la plume de minuit au plomb des cendres.
> ...
> Belle d'un jour et de toujours et de partout.

Woman becomes, beyond all time and the world, "la fille d'un printemps qui ne finit jamais" (De solitude en solitude vers la vie).

Woman has this same durable quality for Breton. Of Nadja he writes that to refuse her anything would be odious, "tant elle est pure, libre de tout lien terrestre, tant elle tient peu, mais merveilleusement, à la vie" (P. 88). Of her lover, Nadja says in turn: "Tu es mon maître. Je ne suis qu'un atome qui respire au coin de tes lèvres ou qui expire" (p. 118). This interdependence, symbolised in Arcane 17 by the star, is the summit of the poet's liberation. In this union, all becomes possible, "pourvu que le sens le plus absolu de l'amour ou de la révolution soit en jeu et entraîne la négation de tout le reste" (Nadja, p. 145). Here and here alone does it become possible for the poet "de planter une étoile au coeur du fini," through "la perception de l'objet intérieur dans l'objet extérieur." This perception follows the path of a return to the Self, for while "l'amour a toujours le temps," Breton writes, "j'ai pour séduire le temps des parures de frissons, le retour de mon corps en soi-même" (Immaculée Conception: "La vie intra-utérine"). This notion is explained by Breton in a powerful image of the same work:

> Quand, saisi à la gorge par le sentiment de la durée, l'homme renonce à renverser les constructions absurdes de son ingéniosité et s'asseoit sur les bancs de l'attention, une petite bise glaciale le force à boutonner sa veste et à rentrer les mains dans ses poches...

Yet from the moment of utter helplessness which this image of a huddled man evokes, is born the poet's certainty that the old "échappatoire" is in the center of the Self; it is in the mythical time which the Self's Center generates that the idea of an archetypal return takes form. Indeed, "la naissance n'est ... qu'un rond-point." This powerful circus which revolves about the Center will raise the poet within himself into mythical time and absolute space, where all experiences correspond in the mirror of the Self to produce a vision of the absolute:

> On ne s'est pas vu dans les miroirs avec un autre visage que le sien, ni transparent, ni fulgurant. On a tout subi: le ciel et ses moutons, toutes les formes de l'orage et du vent, les convolutions du soleil et sa pépinière d'oiseaux, ... la voilure tendue des vaisseaux du sang, pavillon déployé aux temps, la lumière valide, le damier de son jeu, l'oubli des rêves et le calendrier. Pas une seconde de répit...

Valid light. There can be no respite for the poet, for he has inscribed himself in the circle, the most sacred of forms; he is the circle. In Immaculée Conception Breton writes of the circular movement to which the poet willingly condemns himself: "C'est toujours, c'est jamais. Les êtres possibles interrogent les êtres probables, déjà sans pères et mères. Ils attendent leur tour, ils font cercle." With an awareness of the eternal, beyond the contingencies of profane reality, "toujours" and "jamais" are no longer the components of paradox; they are all of durable reality. In Et notre mouvement, Eluard writes: "Nous naissons de partout, nous sommes sans limites/...Nous vivons dans l'oubli de nos métamorphoses." In Corps Mémorable, the notion of metamorphosis gives way to the ultimate product of all change in the poet, for he becomes the locus where all of his separate lives find unity:

> Je suis le spectateur et l'acteur et l'auteur
> Je suis la femme et son mari et leur enfant
> Et le premier amour et le dernier amour
> Et le passant furtif et l'amour confondu...

The primordial androgyne, called for with such hope by Breton in his theoretical writings, here finds its most explicit poetic expression. "La poésie se fait dans un lit comme l'amour," wrote Breton in Sur la route de San Romano, and an unforgettable line of Eluard seeks "La porte du temps ouverte entre tes jambes" (Prête aux baisers résurrecteurs).

In an interview with José Valverde, a Madrid journalist, in 1950, André Breton stated that Surrealism then had not differed substantially from what it had been in the 1920's, in that its purpose had always been to reconcile the external world with the essentially internal or imaginative domain of the artist. His explanation is worth noting for the debt which he acknowledges to Guénon:

> Il est aujourd'hui bien connu que le surréalisme ne s'est proposé rien tant que de faire franchir à l'esprit la barrière que lui opposent les antinomies de l'ordre action et rêve, raison et folie, sensation et représentation, etc., qui constituent l'obstacle majeur de la pensée occidentale. Dans son effort continu en ce sens, il n'a cessé d'évaluer les appuis qu'il trouvait...dans la pensée dite "traditionnelle" telle qu'elle s'exprime avec autorité dans un ouvrage comme La Grande Triade de René Guénon. 21

In this light, it becomes clear that, with essentially minor variations given their proper due, Surrealism and Guénon developed along basically parallel lines, for they drew inspiration and hope, each in a special way, from a tradition of symbolic thought which is the very fabric of perception. Summarizing poetically the theoretical writings of Breton, the brief and beautiful language of Eluard may also serve as a fitting exergue to Guénon's life-work. He wrote, in Corps Mémorable:

> Je parle en rêve et je transmets
> Le court moment du grand repos
> Le temps où rien n'est impossible...

LE GRAND JEU

Three years before the publication of Breton's first Manifeste du surréalisme, Roger Gilbert-Lecomte was fourteen years old (1921), and wrote one of his first poems:

> Je serai le point nul parmi l'illimité.
> Je ne comprendrai plus ce mot: réalité.
> Etre n'existe pas; voici mon rêve ultime:
> Nier tout et ne plus concevoir que l'abîme. 22

This adolescent verse is probably the earliest statement of intent of the Grand Jeu movement. Its members, taking their impulse and general direction from the Surrealists, called themselves "les Phrères Simplistes", and baptized themselves anew, signifying this symbolic rebirth with new names which were intended to contain the essential nature of each. Roger Gilbert-Lecomte became "Rog-Jarl", because he possessed "le privilège d'être un ange noir déchu qui devient certaines nuits un vampire aux gencives saignantes...." René Daumal, who became "Phils" to Lecomte's "Papa", as pupil to master, was named "Nathaniel" for his wisdom. Roger Vailland, "étant encore dans les langes de la connaissance," becomes "Dada". Since he is "le plus bourgeois de tous," he is also known as "Francois". The fourth "Phrère", Robert Meyrat, "le plus mystérieux, celui qui parle peu et toujours au nom de l'Absolu," becomes "La Stryge".[23]

The "Phrères Simplistes", each of whose members was "un Saint Pliste", were all students at Rheims (1923-1925) when they became a group. "Simplisme, nul sens à rechercher sous ce mot," wrote Daumal to Vailland in 1925; "Pourtant il y a peut-être quelque analogie avec cet état d'enfance que nous cherchons--un état où tout est simple et facile" (L'Herne, p. 246). This was the first of several "spiritual conventions" which bound the group together. In the first comprehensive critical work devoted exclusively to this movement to date [Le Grand Jeu (Paris: Denoël, 1970)], Michel Random has written with insight on the principles which created the "Simpliste" atmosphere of these angry and inspired artists. The "Phrères" thought of themselves as Angels. "Non pas des Anges éthérés et de nature divine, mais des Anges visionnaires qui n'ont plus de nature charnelle et peuvent voyager librement dans l'au-delà" (Random, I, 20). They saw themselves as having a "cosmic essence", and conceived of their language as a vehicle for the transmission of cosmic realities. Furthermore, these "Phrères Anges", being capable of real survival only in a kind of intermediary world of the mind, "cultivent comme on respire tous les états d'ivresse. Ils ne se reconnaissent aucune interdiction, ni aucune limite. Ils sont libres de la liberté du souffle qui les porte là où il veut, dans les mondes noirs, dans les paradis, les enfers, dans les cercles et les vibrations infinies où se jouent toutes les transmutations, toutes les métamorphoses de l'après-vie. Ils sont là où la mort n'existe

plus" (Random, I, 20). In this supposedly angelic atmosphere, there were no borderlines whatsoever between the visible and the invisible, between the gross and the subtle, between esoteric vision and exoteric reality. Thus to make absolutely clear to the world at large (read Reims-la-plate) the fundamental crystallization of these "cosmic possibilities the "Phrères" plunged headlong into a "vie fantastique ... entre la Terre et la Lune," making Rheims the reluctant locus of their apparent anarchy. Their program of action reads like the itinerary of their idols, the Surrealists: to awaken their beloved, boring Rheims, they will ring doorbells, sound fire alarms, challenge pedestrians with swords, improve upon the war-time ruins of the city, run rampant with inflated prophylactics, make young girls blush, spit on members of the clergy, get rolling drunk, and sing their very own anthem of the famous drinking song, as parodied by Daumal:

> Pour notre souper de bons petits garçons
> Aux yeux chas-si-eux, et aux petits bras ronds
> A l'oreil-le bien fai-te
> Parfumée au citron
> Et v'la c' qu'est bon et bon
> Et voilà la vie la vie
> La vie chéri-i-e
> Ah Ah
> Et voilà la vie que les Simplistes ont.

With their secret readings at Lecomte's house (52, rue Hincmar, Rheims, accessible to those who know the secret password), they celebrated the poetry of Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Nerval, drinking philters and flapping their unwashed wings as drunken swans to a Leda-world. Lecomte-Rog-Jarl was Satan's Angel, Daumal-Nathaniel was "un Ange exilé", Vailland-François was "un Ange androgyne". As for Meyrat-La Stryge, he is "ni de la terre ni du ciel,... ne semble pas encore né." Of La Stryge, Daumal said to Random:

> Il y a encore la Stryge que vous ne connaîtrez peut-être pas. C'est presque un mythe. Je lui écris régulièrement sans recevoir de réponse; je n'ose pas mettre mon adresse sur l'enveloppe, elle reviendrait. Mais on me dit: la Stryge est là, regarde par ce hublot. Je ne vois rien, mais je suis sûr. Idole à qui on ne peut parler. Quand il baise la main d'une femme, il y laisse toujours un filet de sang. On ne peut que tomber à ses pieds et pleurer (Random, I, 23).

Soon, these compellingly strange figures go to Paris to continue their studies, and attract the attention of like-minded figures on the literary scene. Daumal studies Sanskrit, enters the Lycée Henri IV in October, 1925.[24] Vailland goes to Louis-le-Grand the same year. They meet the Yugoslavian Monny de Boully, a friend of Aragon, Artaud, Eluard. Vailland signs up Arthur Harfaux and Maurice Henry in 1926. Together, they prepare to publish a literary magazine under the guidance of Breton. "Ce sera une revue littéraire et politique aussi," Daumal writes to Lecomte, "sous la protection des surréalistes, mais plus jeune..." (L'Herne, p. 247). In 1927, the Dutchman Hendrik Cramer, as well as Vera Milanova and André Rolland de Renéville join the group. In 1928, the first issue of their review is published, titled Le Grand Jeu by Vailland, who had suggested the name as a better one than Daumal's and Lecomte's La Voie.

In Avant-propos au premier numéro du Grand Jeu (1928), Roger Gilbert-Lecomte gives a concise picture of the projects and expected destinies of the movement which, at the Lycée of Rheims several years before, the small group of friends had called "simpliste":

> Le Grand Jeu est irrémédiable; il ne se joue qu'une fois. Nous voulons le jouer à tous les instants de notre vie. C'est encore à "qui perd gagne". Car il s'agit de se perdre. Nous voulons gagner. Or, le Grand Jeu est un jeu de hasard, c'est-à-dire d'adresse, ou mieux de "grâce": la grâce de Dieu, et la grâce des gestes (L'Herne, p. 38).

To win, in the sense given to that word by Lecomte in this manifesto, is to establish one's true identity in terms of a set of archetypes which are strikingly reminiscent of those of the Surrealists, and which take their inspiration--admittedly--from the symbolic universe of René Guénon. The Grand Jeu players conceive of themselves as the instruments, via the creative literary act, of a transcendent reality which they consider the only reality. "Nous ne voulons pas écrire," writes Lecomte; "nous nous laissons écrire." Their involuntary creative act, much along the lines of Breton's "psychic automatism", is conceived as a search for an identity which takes form along analogical lines. Their figure, their metaphor, reminds one of the apprentice in Poisson Soluble, who had used a mirror to "find himself". This metaphor, in turn, is the same one used by Guénon, in Le Symbolisme de la Croix, to express the real (i.e., traditional) meaning of analogical thought whereby individual man may be related to his archetype, Universal Man. "Ainsi, par exemple, de même que l'image d'un objet dans un miroir est inversée par rapport à l'objet," Guénon had written, "ce qui est le premier ou le plus grand dans l'ordre principiel est, du moins en apparence, le dernier ou le plus petit dans l'ordre de la manifestation."[25] Now Lecomte writes, summing up the proposed efforts of his companions, that their aim is "nous reconnaître nous-mêmes et les uns les autres: je me regarde chaque matin dans un miroir pour me composer une figure humaine douée d'une identité dans la durée" (L'Herne, p. 39).

A thirst for the discovery of cyclic time is of capital importance for the Grand Jeu group; it is what composes for them the state of grace enunciated in the opening lines of Lecomte's Avant-propos, and of the spirit of childhood which marked their adolescent lives in Rheims. A search for cyclic duration will justify their rallying cry: "Nous ne sommes pas individualistes: au lieu de nous enfermer dans notre passé, nous marchons unis tous ensemble, chacun emportant son propre cadavre sur son dos." By a striking image of regeneration, Lecomte here echoes one of primitive man's earliest symbolic expressions: every death is a point along the great circle of being; every physical state from birth to a cyclic rebirth is an active operator in the composition of mythical time and absolute space. Lecomte writes: "Ce sont ces instants éternels que nous cherchons partout, que nos textes, nos dessins feront naître peut-être chez quelques-uns... C'est en de tels instants que nous absorberons tout, que nous avalerons Dieu pour en devenir transparents jusqu'à disparaître" (L'Herne, p. 39).

In a brief essay dealing with Rimbaud's celebrated Lettre du Voyant, Rolland de Renéville wrote, in the first issue of Le Grand Jeu, that "la conception individualiste du Moi est à la base de l'échec poétique éprouvé depuis deux mille ans par le monde occidental." In this contribution to the Grand Jeu doctrine, titled "L'élaboration d'une méthode," Renéville believes, with Rimbaud, that poetry is the purest reflection of a race, that the Occidental world, bred under the sign of individualism, could not produce a poetry that did not seek its context in "le sensible", for "seul le désir d'unité permet à l'esprit humain d'opérer la synthèse qui le fait remonter à l'idée" (L'Herne, p. 92). It is this sense of poetry as a sacrament, as a vehicle of Hermetic or archetypal correspondence, that the Grand Jeu movement saw in Rimbaud, and took up with much hope through the writings of Guénon. "A travers Pythagore et Platon, Rimbaud accède à la méthode que les Grecs empruntèrent à l'Orient" (L'Herne, p. 95). Here, as in Rimbaud le Voyant (1929), Renéville attaches the poet to Hermetic tradition. In Rimbaud's poetry, Renéville finds "la notion d'une conscience universelle à laquelle il est possible de remonter par la purification, et le détachement du sensible, obtenus à travers de multiples expériences. En un mot, toute la métaphysique orientale est là" (L'Herne, p. 94). Renéville cites Paterne Berrichon's Jean-Arthur Rimbaud, le Poète (Paris: Mercure de France, 1912), p. 89: "Il faisait de longues stations à la bibliothèque de la ville, où ... il dévorait de vieux bouquins d'alchimie et de cabale." In Arthur Rimbaud (New York: New Directions, 1961), p. 105, Enid Starkie states that Rimbaud "did not accept or use the full creed or all dogmas of the Cabala and there is no evidence that he closely studied even the popular texts..." Be this as it may, Renéville's sensitive and penetrating study suggests that, even if Rimbaud had no formal contact with Hermetic or esoteric doctrine, his poetry is suffused with a cogent, deliberate, and genuine awareness of something powerfully reminiscent of this doctrine, which one might attribute to intuition rather than an erudite (and therefore essentially artificial) intimacy with archetypal symbolic thought. Furthermore, while Miss Starkis is suspicious of demonstrably provable esoteric sources in Rimbaud, she devotes an illuminating chapter to the Cabbala in her biography, citing no less an authority than Eliphas Lévi in the expression of Rimbaud's aesthetics. The conception of the individualistic philosophy, according to Lévi, Miss Starkie writes (p. 109), "is at the root of the poetic failure of the

West. This theory is one of the central and most important tenets of Rimbaud's aesthetic doctrine."

With Renéville, and in the same spirit of inspired anger against his times, Roger Gilbert-Lecomte writes in the second issue of Le Grand Jeu that the movement sees a great hope in Rimbaud. The hope is expressed in terms of the archetypal regeneration of the poet, and really leaves no doubt that Hermetic doctrine was the life-force of this literary movement. In Après Rimbaud la mort des Arts (L'Herne, p. 101), Lecomte writes:

> Le propre d'un Rimbaud sera d'apparaître à jamais, avec l'ironie d'un retour éternel, des sa plume posée pour ne plus la reprendre, comme le précurseur de tout ce qui veut naître et qu'à l'avance il déflora du caractère de nouveauté que l'on prête gratuitement aux naissances. Celle perpétuelle du millenium eut ainsi en lui son rare témoin: on peut le dire exactement prophète.

In L'univers des mythes, published in the second issue of Le Grand Jeu (1929), Lecomte writes angrily against the mentality that had judged Rimbaud, among others, so harshly: "Souvenez-vous, hommes, du fond caverneux de vous-mêmes: votre peau n'a pas toujours été votre limite. Il fut un temps où la conscience n'était pas emprisonnée dans cette outre puante, un temps où le cercle magique des horizons lui-même ne suffisait pas à emprisonner l'homme..." The role of the new poet, Lecomte writes, is to provide this prisoner of time and place to discover the great tradition which had allowed others to soar beyond their limits. "Pour te permettre de suivre désormais l'étoile du devenir," he says, echoing Guénon, "voici que soulevant un pan du grand voile d'Isis je te découvre les prestiges du passé, du présent et de l'avenir, du passé le plus lointain de l'univers, de ton propre passé plus vieux encore jusqu'au point immémorial où l'individuel sortit de l'universel... (L'Herne, p. 145).

L'Univers des Mythes is one of the most revealing pieces of theoretical writing of the Grand Jeu movement. Significantly, it offers us a close look at the similarities which exist between this group of writers and the work of Guénon. To a world where a sense of archetypal myth has lost its hold, Lecomte offers the angry words that the "Phrères Simplistes" had once translated into violent, destructive action. Man is a monster, whom Lecomte addresses with insults: "Tu deviendras une partie inconsciente, un engrenage de ta machine sociale et, sans sursaut, tu atteindras ton but suprême de cellule indivise d'un organisme rationnel comme les fourmis, comme les abeilles. Et comme elles tu raccourciras et tu durciras. Et tu seras insecte" (L'Herne, p. 146). Man has lost all notion of a hierophany in his daily lives, that his ordinary, individual selves are but a part of the immemorial "Spirit-Being" which was the paradigm of his ancestors. The Ariadne's thread back to this primordial awareness, Lecomte writes, is "la voie initiatique...la loi du Devenir;" it is every one of his unconscious acts, "lorsqu'il gesticule rituellement, qu'il mime la croix des bras, ... le triangle des coudes, ... le cercle magique." The only possible evolution for Occidental man, Lecomte writes, is for him to become aware of the genuine and durable participation in an archetypal life implicit in his unconscious, "irrational" gestures...for while "l'Occident fut aveuglé par la fausse antinomie qui oppose le monde objectif au monde subjectif, ... l'Orient, au contraire, a toujours proclamé l'identité du monde sensible et du monde subjectif" (L'Herne, pp. 148-149). Man's true progress lies, Lecomte states, in an active and conscious awareness of the universality of dreams and myth. "Il est un univers onirique réel et commun à toutes consciences." It is this awareness that will set the Occidental mind back on the path of wisdom, which Lecomte conceives of as an ability to transcend the contingent by retaining "le sens de l'invisible." This, he states, is what makes of the poet a Voyant:

> La Voyance, c'est la métaphysique expérimentale. Toute vision ouvre une fenêtre de la conscience sur un univers où vivent les Images qui sont, en réalité, des formes de l'esprit, les concepts concrets, les symboles derniers de la réalité. La voyance est la dernière étape avant la lumière incréée de l'Etre total, avant l'Omniscience immédiate. De sorte que le fait lyrique doit se suffire à lui-même. Un poète ne peut croire qu'en la "poésie" qui est un nom du Monde du Mystère. Il ne peut penser qu'en la "poésie" qui est un nom du Monde du Mystère. Il ne peut penser que la transcription intellectuelle de ses visions. Car la révélation est une et la dictature de l'esprit engendre sa justice suprême.

> Nul ne peut être voyant et adepte d'une
> religion ou d'un système quelconque de pensée
> sans trahir sa vision.

In calling for this "intellectual transcription of vision," Lecomte places the poet in the direct genealogical line of Hermetic doctrine, making of the principles of the Emerald Table the rallying force of all poetic activity. Through the careful and deliberate transmission of archetypal correspondences, the poet's symbols will make of him the modern practitioner of ars regia, the alchemist of minds, the true leader of men.

In this sense, the Grand Jeu group considered Guénon as one of the most important members of their society. In the very first issue of their short-lived review, this hommage is quite emphatic and unequivocal. "A M. René Guénon nous déclarons," they wrote, "que sa pensée théorique dans son essence est la nôtre; que la tradition dont il se réclame est bien la seule que nous reconnaissions" (L'Herne, p. 73). In the second issue, Daumal wrote ("Sur les livres de René Guénon") that while "les mains occidentales changent l'or en plomb," the great Hermetic tradition which the Grand Jeu group saw as the salvation of the Occident was in sacred safekeeping in the hands of the visionary. "René Guénon ne trahit jamais la pensée hindoue au profit des besoins particuliers de la philosophie occidentale..." As no one before him had with such force and authority, Guénon, Daumal writes,

"s'est exclusivement incorporé à l'esprit originel de la Tradition dont nous nous réclamons avec lui..." (L'Herne, p. 133).

CHAPTER THREE

NOTES

NOTES

1. Henri Clouard, Histoire de la Littérature Française (Paris: Albin Michel, 1949), p. 531.

2. René Guénon, in Voile d'Isis-Etudes Traditionnelles (Paris, 1949). Reprinted in Etudes sur l'Hindouisme (Paris: Editions Traditionnelles, 1968), pp. 280-281.

3. Antonin Artaud, "La Mise en scène et la Métaphysique," Nouvelle Revue Française (Paris, February 1, 1932), pp. 219-234.

4. René Guénon, Le Théosophisme (Paris: Editions Traditionnelles, 1969), p. 450.

5. André Gide, Journal (1942-1949) (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), p. 195.

6. Henri Bosco, Hommage à André Gide (Paris: NRF, 1951), pp. 276-279.

7. Ibid., p. 276.

8. Henri Bosco, Malicroix (Paris: Gallimard, 1948). All page references are taken from this edition, and are indicated in the text in parentheses.

9. Henri Bosco, "L'Exaltation et l'Amplitude," Fontaine (No. 19-20, 1942). All italics mine.

10. Henri Bosco, Des Sables à la mer (Paris: Gallimard, 1950). All page references are taken from this edition, and are indicated in the text in parentheses.

11. André Breton, Entretiens (1913-1952) (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 107.

12. André Breton, Manifestes du Surréalisme (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1962), p. 16. All references to Breton's theoretical writings, including the Manifestes and Poisson Soluble, are taken from this edition. Page numbers are indicated in the text in parentheses.

13. Marcel Proust, A la recherche du temps perdu, Vol. I (Paris: Pléiade, 1954), p. 5. Elsewhere, the narrator notes that, "tout tournait autour de moi dans l'obscurité, les choses, les pays, les années...," observes "les murs invisibles [qui] tourbillonnaient dans les ténèbres," and sums up his thoughts as "ces évocations

tournoyantes..." (pp. 6-7). An awareness of cyclic time is a major force in Proust's work, as are relationships which are inspired from archetypal forms (p. 44): "Je trouve très raisonnable la croyance celtique que les âmes de ceux que nous avons perdus sont captives dans quelque être inférieur..."

14. Breton writes, in Du surréalisme en ses oeuvres vives (p. 362): "Sur le fond du problème, qui est des rapports de l'esprit humain avec le monde sensoriel, le surréalisme se rencontre ici avec des penseurs aussi différents que Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin et Schopenhauer en ce sens qu'il estime comme eux que nous devons 'chercher à comprendre la nature d'après nous-mêmes, et non pas nous-mêmes d'après la nature'." Although this idea is present in the work of Saint-Martin as has been shown in Chapter I of this study, the quotation used by Breton above is from Schopenhauer. In The Concept of Self in the Symbolist Novel (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1961), Karl D. Uitti writes (p. 25): "A central feature of Schopenhauer's doctrine of the 'world as representation,' this axiom can be taken as a starting-point for the Symbolist novel."

15. René Guénon, Le Symbolisme de la Croix, p. 306.

16. René Guénon, Les Etats multiples de l'Etre (Paris: Editions Vega, 1957), pp. 7-8: "...cet état humain n'est qu'un état de manifestation comme tous les autres, et parmi une indéfinité d'autres; il se situe, dans la hiérarchie des degrés de l'Existence, à la place qui lui est assignée par sa nature même, c'est-à-dire par le caractère limitatif des conditions qui le définissent, et cette place ne lui confère ni supériorité ni infériorité absolue."

17. André Breton, Nadja (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), p. 13. All page references are from this edition, and are indicated in the text in parentheses.

18. All references to Breton's poems are from André Breton, Poèmes (Paris: Gallimard, 1948). These include Clair de terre, Mont de piété, Les Champs magnétiques, and Oubliés.

19. André Breton (with Paul Eluard), Immaculée Conception (Paris: Editions Surréalistes, Corti, 1930). These poems contain La Mort, La Surprise, and La Vie intra-utérine.

20. All references are from Paul Eluard, Derniers poèmes d'amour (Paris: Seghers, 1963). These poems contain Le

dur désir de durer, Le temps déborde, Corps mémorable, and Le Phénix.

21. André Breton, Entretiens (1913-1952) (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 281. The interview with José M. Valverde was printed in Correo literario (Madrid, September, 1950).

22. Written when he was a student at the Lycée of Rheims in 1921, this poem is reproduced in Le Grand Jeu, eds. Marc Thivolet and Pierre Bernard (Paris: Les Cahiers de l'Herne, 1968), p. 246. This important publication, No. 10 in the L'Herne series, brings together many of the early theoretical writings of the Grand Jeu movement, and reproduces in their entirety the contents of the three issues of the group's review (1928-1929). This cahier contains most of the essays, poems, and critical writings of the members of the Grand Jeu group: Roger Gilbert-Lecomte, Maurice Henry, René Daumal, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, Pierre Minet, André Rolland de Renéville, Roger Vailland, Monny de Boully, and Pierre Audard. It also contains important contributions by writers who expressed great interest in the movement but were less active in it: Robert Desnos, Saint-Pol-Roux, the psychologist G.E. Monod-Herzen, and Michel Leiris. Works quoted from this source will be indicated in the text by "L'Herne" followed by the page numbers.

23. Michel Random, Le Grand Jeu, 2 vols. (Paris: Denoel, 1970), I, 19-20. This is the only comprehensive work to date on the Grand Jeu group, and provides an incisive history, analysis, and anthology of the lives and works of René Daumal, Roger Gilbert-Lecomte, Roger Vailland, Rolland de Renéville, and Joseph Sima. All references to this work will be indicated in the text as "Random", followed by page numbers.

24. Daumal prepared to sit for the exams of the Ecole Normale Supérieure. His philosophy professor was Alain. In a letter to his parents that year, he wrote: "Monsieur Chartier... est très intéressant malgré ses façons bizarres, et sa manière décousue de faire ses cours (ou plutôt ses causeries)" (L'Herne, p. 247).

25. René Guénon, Le Symbolisme de la Croix, p. 68.

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ABSTRACT

RENE GUENON: A CHAPTER OF FRENCH SYMBOLIST THOUGHT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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In this thesis, I propose to study the influence of René Guénon (1886-1951) in the development of Symbolist doctrine in French literary and intellectual thought in the twentieth century.

In the first part of Chapter One, I examine the earliest forms of symbolic perception and the origins of Hermetic doctrine. This doctrine, particularly in the expression it finds in the principles of the Emerald Table, is generally considered to be the earliest recorded "method" of analogical or esoteric thought, the basis of the Alchemists' magisterium or Great Work, and the earliest known expression of the philosophia perennis or Primordial Tradition which is the central theme of Guénon's writings. Believed to be the revelations of Hermes Trismegistos, the principles of the Emerald Table are at the center of early poetic activity which sought to express correspondences

between exoteric phenomena and sacred or archetypal paradigms. Through this "esoteric" activity, whose symbols had the primary function of expressing temporal and spatial perennity, the earliest poets performed hieratic functions as "mediators" between men and gods. The Emerald Table is therefore an essential expression of early symbolic perception, and enables one to relate certain fundamental activities of the modern poet to the Primordial Tradition.

In the second part of Chapter One, I trace the development of Hermetic doctrine in France in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Through eighteenth-century Illuminism and Theosophy, the Alchemists' magisterium is taken up in France with a renewed though less disciplined enthusiasm. The writings of certain important Illuminists (Saint-Martin, Martinès de Pasqually, Joseph de Maistre, Fabre d'Olivet) are examined in an attempt to show that the best work of the Romantic and Symbolist poets progressed apace with a renewed interest in esoterism. I attempt to show that Hermetic doctrine becomes once again the life-force of poetic creation, the modern poetic experience sharing with the rebirth of esoterism in the eighteenth century the same Weltanschauung.

Relying in part on the three full-length works on Guénon to date (two of which are largely biographical), the brief biography which introduces Chapter Two provides considerable new information about Guénon through the unpublished letters which he wrote to Noële Maurice-Denis Boulet from 1916 to 1924. The second part of this chapter is an examination of the traditional symbol in Guénon's works, and attempts to provide a concise analysis of Guénon's thought, particularly of its roots in Hermetic symbolism, and of his doctrinal legacy to certain modern writers.

Chapter Three is an examination of Guénon's presence in the writings of Antonin Artaud, Henri Bosco, André Breton, and members of the Grand Jeu movement, including René Daumal, Roger Gilbert-Lecomte, and André Rolland de Renéville. Important elements of the Primordial Tradition and its major symbols--indeed, the skeletal framework of Hermetic doctrine--are present in the work of these writers, who have expressed a significant debt to René Guénon in the elaboration of their literary theories. In this chapter, I attempt to complete the circular movement initiated in my earlier discussion of archetypal symbols. As the traditional symbol was a vehicle that allowed legendary Man to find (in ways that are at once intelligible and beautiful) correspondences between the complementary worlds of essence and substance, so René Guénon was an agent of mediation between modern poets and their ancient counterparts.